# GENERATION Z: A SEAT AT THE TABLE

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# ABSTRACT

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The context was First Baptist Church of South Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. The church has a vibrant youth ministry in which the youth are active participants in various areas of youth ministry; however, they are overlooked in leadership. I believe that when youth are trained and developed in leadership, they are empowered, affirmed, and motivated to reach beyond themselves in their support of the church community. This project seeks to provide adequate data by using training modules, surveys, questionnaires, and group discussions to address the problem. The research method was of mixed methods to include qualitative and quantitative methodology.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first want to thank God for granting me an opportunity to become a Doctor of the church. I want to thank my family for supporting me throughout this process. Appreciation and gratitude are especially extended to my daughter, Sydney, whom I will forever be grateful for her love, feedback, and time.

I would like to express my gratitude to my mentors, J. Elvin Sadler, DMin. and Willie Marshall, DMin, for their guidance, support, encouragement, and lots of patience throughout the Doctor of Ministry program.

To my Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Dwight C. Jones, and my Pastor, Rev. Dr. Derik E. Jones, words cannot express the gratitude that I have in my heart for their support. I would like to acknowledge my support team, who helped facilitate this project, my professional associate, Justice Cleo Powell, and facilitators, Minister Bonita Grant, Deacon Phil White, and Deaconess Chandra Barnes. To my peer associate, Brian Thompson, "thank you" for his encouragement throughout this process. Also, I would like to acknowledge all the youth who agreed to participate in this project. I could not have done it without them.

My deepest gratitude is extended to Lori D. Spears, DMin, Ed.D for her skillful work and encouragement throughout this process.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Ella Louise McCall, who has supported me throughout this process and my children, who are my rock. I love you very much!

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# INTRODUCTION

Generation Z are not mini-Millennials. They are born between 1999 and 2015. They are the largest generation between sixty-nine and seventy million children and teens whose world is saturated by digital technology and mediated by mobile devices.[1] They are constantly experiencing radical changes in technology and understandings of family, sexuality, and gender. They live in multigenerational households, and the fastest-growing demographics within their age group is multiracial. They will not merely influence American culture; they will represent American culture. [2]

Generation Z live in a world that is inundated by problems such as climate change, terrorism, and income inequality. Their personalities and life skills are developing in a socio-economic environment marked by chaos, uncertainty, volatility, and complexity. Polls, statistics, and anecdotal data suggest that this generation will be as engaged with the issues of the day as any generation before them-and maybe even better at making positive change.[3]

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[1] Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, "Generation Z: The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation," 2018, pg. 10.

[2] James Emery White, "Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World", (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), pg.39.

[3] Meet Generation Z, "Forget Everything You Learned about Millennials," *Sparks and Honey*, June 17, 2014. Accessed April 3, 2020. http:/www.slideshow.net/sparksandhoney/generation-z-final-june 17.

Generation Z's coping mechanisms have led to a strong sense of independence and an entrepreneurial spirit. According to a study by Northeastern University, a "notable 42 percent of Generation Z respondents expect to work for themselves during their careers."[4] But their goals are not simply economic security. They are marked by a powerful sense of wanting to make a difference—and thinking that they can. Their accepting nature leads to strong support for such things as gay marriage and transgender rights. For Generation Z, the idea of "acceptance" is often interchangeable with the idea of "affirmation."[5]

The most defining characteristic of Generation Z is that it is arguably the first generation that will have been raised in a post-Christian context. As a result, it is the first post-Christian generation. Most of them still believe in the existence of God (78 percent), but less than half attend weekly religious services of any kind (41 percent), and only eight percent would cite a religious leader as a role model.[6] Given this information, how does the church retain such a large, diverse group of young people who are being raised in a post-Christian context? To reverse this trend, will the church allow this generation to lead them into the future, or will they hold on to their traditions and shrink into irrelevance?

This research is about raising awareness of the need to empower this generation to help lead the church into the future. Overlooking them in leadership for lack of maturity, knowledge, and commitment is doing a disservice to the church community. This generation is the most independent, digitally savvy, and the most entrepreneur minded

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[4] James Emery White, "Meet Generation Z," pg. 40.

[5] James Emery White, "Meet Generation Z," pg. 46.

[6]Roger Donaghy, "Innovative Imperative: Meet Generation Z," Northeastern University, Accessed April 3, 2020. http://www.northeastern.edu'news/2014/11/inovation-imperative-meet-generation-z/.

individuals. Church leaders must recognize this and identify ways to include them in leadership to remain relevant in the future. This research will show that when this generation is empowered to lead, the church becomes more diverse, healthier, and more family-oriented. In turn, they become empowered, affirmed, and motivated to move beyond themselves to become more active in ministry.

Chapter one of this project focused on my spiritual journey and ministry context. The purpose of this chapter is to understand how my journey and context converged to form the basis of this project. To facilitate this effort, I carefully analyzed my ministry context and professional development portions of my spiritual autobiography, coupled with the needs of the ministry identified in the context analysis.

After careful examination and prayer, the thought of Generation Z being overlooked in leadership developed. It is my belief that this generation is the most overlooked population in leadership within the church. They are overlooked in part because of the assumptions that they lack the knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead. Contrary to these sentiments, we must rethink the way we see them and allowed this generation to be trained and mentored so that they can develop the skills necessary to lead the church into the future. I desire to gain a better understanding of God's use of this generation and their effectiveness in leading. There is a place for them in ministry, and it is not in the background or off to the side. They can no longer be held to the adage of "children should be seen and not heard." This generation has much to offer, and with the proper guidance, they can lead and be effective in ministry.

As with any church-related plan, a foundation must be built that focuses on scripture, history, theology, and interdisciplinary engagement. Chapter Two concentrates

on a biblical foundation that will help support my project. 1 Samuel 16:1-13 provides evidence of the biblical correlation to the project's focus. The disregard of David as the next king of Israel is a reminder that we should not overlook the least and the young when it comes to identifying future leaders. The young David was overlooked as Israel's next king through the eyes of the prophet Samuel, David's father Jesse, and the elders in the village. They ignored the fact that David, the eighth son and a shepherd boy, who spent a considerable amount of time in one place, doing a good job, being faithful, and working diligently, could potentially become the next king of Israel.

Critical analysis and synthesis of the selected text helped to substantiate the argument that the choice of the young David showed God looking toward Israel's future. In providing a leader with a heart for Him and demonstrating how that leadership can be found in the person who is presumed to be the smallest, weakest, and most overlooked. 1 Samuel 16: 1-13 speaks to the underlying question I had regarding Generation Z: If God can produce young leaders and train Samuel to "see" them, shouldn't we be receptive to "seeing" the youth leaders that God produces? This question shaped my project in an effort not to overlook youth who are called by God to lead. This chapter led to further inquiry and laid the biblical foundation for this project.

Chapter three provides a historical foundation for this project. This chapter will highlight an event in history and use it as a pedagogical approach to examine the consequences that arise from overlooking a portion of the population due to their capabilities, intelligence, and leadership. The examination of the women's liberation movement demonstrates how the indifference to the issues of the women of color, along

with the invisibility of their presence, participation, and contributions, resulted in division, alienation, and lack of support from the movement's overall objective.

The examination of the women's movement reminds us that everyone has a vital role to play in the success of any organization or community. The feelings of exclusion can have a lasting impact and have profound consequences. It further informs my project because this generation has a growing need to be included and socially accepted by their peers and leaders. Any organization involving Gen Z's must find a way to be inclusive in their planning and leadership. It is important to establish a feeling of belonging by creating a path for leadership so that their voices are heard and their opinion matters. When allowed to play an essential role in the church community, it encourages self-confidence and self-awareness, which promotes acceptance and can help them grow into the leaders of tomorrow. If this generation are not allowed to play an essential role, the impending result could lead to the same consequences of the women's movement; alienation, division, and lack of support of the church community.

After providing the biblical and historical foundation for this project, the next chapter provides the theological framework. In chapter four, the focus is on Liberation Theology. Jesus proclaims in Luke 4:18 that "the Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free." When Jesus elevated the powerless in biblical times, he was lifting those who were considered the least of these.

Liberation theology is key to deriving answers and solutions to address the overlooking of Generation Z in leadership. In my context, this generation has not been

able to exercise their freedom to lead. They are disenfranchised and underrepresented in leadership. This disenfranchisement and underrepresentation have denied and silenced their voices. This generation has not been able to give voice to their thoughts, concerns, convictions, or beliefs responding to their status. Having a voice is crucial. Sometimes just being able to speak, to be heard, to be believed, are crucial parts of membership in a family, a community, and a society. By redefining, whose voice is valued, one can redefine society and its values. If this generation is to perceive the church as "the place to be," one must acknowledge their struggles and assist them in becoming an intricate part of the community.

The next chapter, five, discusses the interdisciplinary foundation for this project by analyzing Social Psychology and the Need-Threat Theory. This chapter provides information on the psychological effects of exclusion and how those effects can harm an individuals' need to belong. Social psychologist knows that exclusion and rejection are such powerful fears that people will do all sorts of things to avoid. Understanding how people relate to each other, why they choose to exclude and ignore others, and what determines their response to rejection and exclusion has never been of greater importance than today. Recent research has linked being excluded to aversive psychological effects, as well as aversive behavioral outcomes. Yet, despite the far-reaching implications of social exclusion on both social outcast and on society as a whole, it was only in the last decade that social psychology began to regard social exclusion as an area worthy of investigation rather than merely and outcome to be avoided.

The Need-Threat Model was applied to help us understand that when people are excluded from desired social relationships, the psychological effects can be harmful to

the individual's self-esteem, meaningful existence, belongingness, and control. Behavioral reactions to the exclusion can cause antisocial, aggressive, or passive and self-defeating responses. Furthermore, when one evaluates the actual experiences that people have when excluded, it opens up potential avenues for strategic intervention aimed at inclusion.

The previous chapters present a foundation for the project, and chapter six describes the methodology, the implementation of the project, and discusses the results. The first part of this chapter acknowledges the use of a qualitative research design to address the hypothesis. The methodology merges qualitative measures of data collection, such as observations and forums with the quantitative measures of surveys and questionnaires to triangulate the research information. This project is based on a phenomenological inquiry and offers the reader background information for the study to include biases involved and an analysis of the project. Chapter six gives a reflection of the success and concludes with a summary of the learning.

# CHAPTER ONE

# MINISTRY FOCUS

## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine my spiritual journey and current ministry context to understand how they converged to form the basis of this project. To facilitate this effort, I carefully analyzed my ministry context and professional development portions of my Spiritual Autobiography, coupled with the needs of the ministry identified in the context analysis. These objectives, my context analysis, and personal development formulated the basis of the Doctor of Ministry Project.

## Contextual Analysis

After careful analysis of my ministry context, the needs are many due to the growth and expansion of the church. The growth has prompted the leadership to expand and build a second location in the county. After interviewing numerous members from both congregations, I discovered that one of our most significant issues is the feeling of being overlooked by members who remained at the first location. The addition of the second location has caused the members of the first location to feel overlooked and excluded by leadership because of the various changes that have taken place. The primary focus of leadership is on the growth of the new location, and the first location has suffered because of it. The attendance of the first location has decreased because many of

the members have decided to attend the second location. The members who have remained believe that the church is not getting the required attention to stay viable and relevant in the community. They think that the church will continue to decline and eventually dissolve or be sold.

The church has a rich history and has been a pillar of the community for 196 years. Its members felt captive to the new changes surrounding them and felt deserted and abandoned. In Alan Roxburgh's book, *Crossing the Bridge*, he describes perfectly the feelings of being held captive to new surroundings. He writes,

> What shattered the Israelites' world was the crisis of invasion and exile. It was unthinkable! Despite the warnings of prophets, the people had no framework to understand, accept, or receive the catastrophic events. This was a crisis not only of politics but also of faith and identity. It was the loss and ending of a world. The resultant effect on the people was complete disorientation and chaos. This was the meaning of Psalm 137 where the question rang out: How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Here was no rhetorical question. It was the anguished cry of a confused people who had lost their world. They were living in the midst of grief, pain and a bottomless anger at this sense of being deserted and abandoned. What they wanted to do was destroy the Babylonians and return to a previous world. Israel had no thought of a new future, at this point. Their pain and passion were for the recovery of their old world. They had been completely disembedded from that world.[7]

Some of the members of First Baptist Church were having some difficulties in "crossing the bridge" towards a new future. They were upset and angered by the feelings of desertion and abandonment. The church they knew was changing, and they felt captive to the changes, and they were finding it difficult to process the changes.

Therefore upon careful examination of my context, I would like to focus on a theme of inclusivity surrounding the growth and help leadership focus on the

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[7] Alan Roxburgh and Mike Regale, *Crossing the Bridge* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group, Inc., 2000), 54.

maintenance and expansion of both churches equally. In this way, they both can be viable and relevant within the respective communities.

*A Season of Change*

The growth of our church has been exponential within the last ten years. The addition of a second location has brought about many changes within the church. The changes were necessary to continue the growth and expansion of the ministry. Most leaders understand that change is unavoidable and constant if you want to remain viable and relevant. Sometimes change is within our control, but often it is not. New technology and media advances within our society have forced many organizations to undergo a restructuring and revamp the way they do business; religious institutions are no different. Churches who fail to make the necessary adjustments to this changing environment are becoming irrelevant, obsolete, and lack the required growth to remain viable. Although change is needed, leaders must address and examine how those changes will affect specific populations within their context. The emotional attachment to adjusting and coping with change is difficult, but it is especially problematic when individuals feel overlooked and left out of the process.

Kenneth Quick writes an article titled "Attachment Disorder Churches." In this article, he explains that attachment disorder churches are made, not born. Individual members have felt abandoned somehow, either physically, emotionally, or both. Attachment disorder churches share several common symptoms:

1. Splintering or scattering
2. Resistance to the voice of the Pastor

3. A lack of closeness—or desire to know—the pastor
4. Unwillingness to follow pastoral leadership
5. A spirit of confusion, helplessness, and negativity[8]

Many of these symptoms were displayed throughout my congregation. The leadership must find solutions to these emotional issues so that we can get beyond the feelings of exclusion and begin the work necessary to be a successful church entity.

The first signs of being overlooked were brought on by a change in leadership from a father to his son. The present pastor led the church for over forty years, and with his son taking over, people were left to wonder how the ministry was going to change under his leadership. This change brought about a great deal of fear and anxiety because some people felt that the son was not ready to handle the duties and responsibilities placed before him. Their thoughts were that he never held a job outside of the church and had no work experience in which he has proven his abilities. He lacked the management skills needed to deal with productivity, build consensus, develop goals, or lead an organization. The senior pastor was aware of the fears of the congregants and tried to lessen them by stating that he will advise, train, and develop his son to lead.

The incoming pastor began his leadership with an extensive capital campaign to build a second location in the neighboring county. He titled the capital campaign, "A Season of Change." The capital campaign was an opportunity for the incoming pastor to grow the membership in the second location with his fingerprints, not his father's. It would allow him to introduce himself to the local community and to display his leadership style. Fifteen families were asked to join him by establishing a worship service

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[8] Kenneth Quick, "Attachment Disorder Churches," *Christianity Today*, accessed December 15, 2017, http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2208/fall/3.88.html.

in one of the county's elementary schools. This worship service, which began at 9:15 a.m. and ended at 10:30 a.m., was titled "The Empowerment Hour." Over time, the worship service attracted over 500 new members, and growth was exponential. The church adopted a slogan of "One Church, Two Locations, and One Heartbeat." However, this is not the case. It became Two Churches, Two Locations, with Two Heartbeats.

The incoming pastor wanted to bring in fresh ideas and new talent to help with the changing landscape and to revitalize the worship experience. The pastor's vision to move the church forward with new technology and newly qualified staff caused mixed emotions. Many of the existing members felt left out of the process, and the transition became overwhelming. Those who could not adjust, left the church while others took a "wait and see" approach and participated in the capital campaign begrudgingly.

The first leader to exit was the Minister of Christian Education. He had served with the pastor for over forty-two years and felt that it was time for him to explore other options. He was accustomed to the pastor's traditional style of leadership and was not receptive to the new plans. Many of the members who had served with him for years were heartbroken that he left, and his departure caused more feelings of exclusion because he was someone they loved and respected, someone they could depend upon. Following suit were the Building and Finance Ministers, several associate ministers, the church's secretary, and the bookkeeper. They could not adjust to the leadership style of the incoming pastor. Of course, these occurrences led to more feelings of rejection, concern about the changes, and questions about how these changes were going to affect the church.

*Growth and Expansion*

The second issue revolving around being overlooked and excluded was the building of a second church location. The second location has been the primary focus of the church leadership due to the growing expansion and the financial impact it has placed on the church. In September of 2016, this six million dollar edifice came to completion, and significant changes took place within the congregation. Since the majority of the membership was from the county, those individuals only attended the county location. At the same time, those in or relatively close to the city remained at the old church. The size of the congregations for the 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. worship services began to diminish significantly due to low attendance. All usher ministries were eliminated and combined to create one doorkeeper ministry. One of the starker examples of being overlooked, manifested after the relocation of the evening Bible study, ministry meetings, choir rehearsals, some evening programs, and worship services to the second location. These changes caused some of the members of the first location to leave the church or withdraw from ministries due to lack of transportation or not wanting to drive the extra distance.

The youth ministry suffered greatly during the transition. The relocation of ministries disproportionally diminished this population because a large portion lived in the west, central, and east end of Richmond. One of the significant issues in the transition was a lack of youth engagement. Their disengagement was partly due to them not having a voice in the decision-making process. Their thoughts and ideas were not considered, and as a result, they were not empowered or motivated to move beyond themselves and become active throughout the transition.

Also, the maintenance of the old edifice suffered from leaking ceilings, a broken air conditioning system, and dirty carpets. Members of the first location were disproportionately affected by the changes and felt the church had turned their backs on them and the first location.

The third issue surrounding being overlooked is the community factor. The church was a pillar of the community, and it served many of the low social, economic individuals within the community. They provided housing, food, and clothing, as well as adult daycare. The first location hosted and provided services for the organization called "The Healing Place." The Healing Place provides counseling for the drug and alcohol addicted, and it held its meetings and attended worship service every Sunday at the old church. The first location's identity and stance since its beginning in 1821 have always been about serving the community. In Israel Galindo's book, he states that a church's position has to do with how it views its mission and ministry and how it relates to the world around it. Often, a congregation's stance is determined by its immediate context—including its geographic location. A congregation's stance informs how it engages the public square on broader social and community issues as well as determining to what extent, if at all, the members of the congregation provide overt and visible ministry to its immediate environment.[9] From slavery to Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Era, the first location church had been a beacon in the community. It was a place where people gathered not only for service but to look to the leadership for direction in a world that was ever-changing. Many of the remaining members felt that the leadership was overlooking the church's identity in the community. These members were vested and

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[9] Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Lanham, MD: The Alban Institute Press, 2004), 117.

committed for more than thirty, forty, or fifty years. They feared that despite its rich history, the pastors were going to close down the location and sell the property. Many of these members contributed money towards the capital campaign to help build the new church and were disappointed by the leadership when they did not keep their promise of maintaining and sustaining the old church. The feelings of being overlooked, rejected, and isolated were felt strongly throughout the congregation.

Besides, our church needs to strengthen the length, breadth, and depth of the ministries within the church to include the vision for moving forward. Most of our ministries are relevant for the changing times but need to be improved and expanded to include evangelism. Every ministry within the church should have an evangelistic element to help bring people to Christ. It is the church's mandate. We must be intentional about sharing our faith. Many churches have moved away from allowing persons to give a testimony about the goodness of Jesus. I think this is important not just for us as individuals, but for the community as well. Every program, event, or activity, by any ministry, should have an evangelistic element included.

Some ministries should be eliminated because they have become irrelevant in today's changing times. Our church has over fifty ministries, and one-third of them should be removed because they do not benefit the church in any way. The elimination of ministries may upset some people and make them feel overlooked even more; however, effective communication is key to promoting change.

The church's media and technology need an update that could help promote the current trends. The church's website should be updated to reflect what is currently going on in the ministry. The Facebook page should have a post on different events transpiring

within and outside of the church. The platform for live streaming the worship service continues to have technical difficulties. Although we have a Sunday morning broadcast, a podcast of the pastor giving a brief sermonette will enhance our evangelist piece. A need for experienced individuals in the technology and media fields are necessary to help with the outreach through live streaming, websites, and podcasts. For a church our size, there is a great deal of talent that is untapped or under-utilized for potential growth.

The theme "One Church, Two Locations, with One Heartbeat" has not lived up to its promises. The changes that have taken place have caused people to feel rejected and overlooked amid the expansion. The church's leadership must find a way to confront these feelings and find solutions to help ease the anxiety felt by those left out of the process. The leadership must be clear about its vision for both church communities. The church leaders must engage both congregations and lead them into a collaborative effort to support the changes and find solutions that are inclusive for all.

There is much work to be done, but the message must be communicated effectively and proficiently for change to take place and for people not to feel left out of the process. Developing ways to help people adjust to a changing environment requires a skill set that motivates people to accept change, not feel left out, and move forward toward the vision.

## Ministry and Professional Development

My educational background and leadership skills have equipped me to be able to strategize, encourage, and lead people to accomplish their goals and objectives they set. In my professional setting as a Supervisor and Research Scientist in the Transplant

Division, I have executed leadership training, maintained regulatory compliance, and encouraged and enabled top-notch performance from staff. I am a problem solver with the ability to monitor the day-to-day activities of an ongoing laboratory. I am a hands-on leader who develops relationships with internal and external clients. I have a proven ability to hire and train a diverse staff to be efficient and effective with procedures and protocols centering on quality, safety, and satisfaction. I am a strong communicator with the means to develop productive relationships with management, staff, and clients.

My work as the Youth Minister and an Associate Minister has allowed me to develop, strategize, and implement plans for the Youth Ministry and other ministry opportunities. I have set goals and objectives and executed them promptly. I have developed over time an appreciation for working with the youth and understanding their needs as it relates to them navigating an ever-changing world. It is an honor and privilege to be able to impart Christian values in the development of their faith. This skill set requires time and preparation, all while providing an environment that is favorable for learning. As an Associate Minister, I have had the opportunity to lead, preach, and teach in various areas within my ministry context. In this supportive role, I have helped the leadership with planning, organizing, and leading the congregation toward the vision set forth by the Pastors.

My two seminary degrees, Master of Divinity and Masters in Christian Education, have provided me the knowledge of the spiritual and structural aspects of the church. My biblical understanding, pastoral care, ethics, and Christian education classes have equipped me with the knowledge to support the leadership in developing, encouraging, and growing active Christians. Christian Education is the foundation for all ministries,

and applying these skills to address the needs of the congregation is vital to the growth and maturation of all those involved. It challenges us in viewing practical ways of our faith that are inclusive of all.

## Spiritual Autobiography

My personal experiences in dealing with being overlooked and rejected have allowed me to understand and relate to the feelings of some of the members. My sister received more time and attention from my mother, and I resented them for that. This resentment caused a rift between my sister, my mother, and me. Over time, the resentment turned into anger, and I began to withdraw and isolate myself from them. Members of my church are feeling a similar resentment, they are becoming withdrawn and isolated, and they have withdrawn their membership and financial support. The lack of communication and support has failed, and the church members are showing signs and symptoms of this failure. My mother's inability to communicate with me and her lack of support caused me to doubt my abilities and become insecure.

In the same way, the failure to communicate effectively has caused some members to feel uncertain about the future of the church. The attention given to the new location was the same kind of care given to my sister. Just as I felt left out and overlooked, the members of the old location are expressing some of those same feelings. I did not understand the reasons behind my mother's rejection of me until she explained that my sister needed more love and affection so that she could thrive, just like the new church needs the attention to help it grow and succeed. However, my mother failed to include me in the process, and I felt rejected, alienated, and overlooked. The church's

leadership must find a way to confront these same feelings and find a solution to help ease the anxiety felt by those who are feeling left out. I think that I am uniquely qualified to assist in implementing and executing the changes necessary for my church progression and to heal the wounds that exist.

## Synergy

By merging my spiritual journey, my ministerial and professional skills, and the needs of my context will help form the basis of my Doctor of Ministry Project. My area of interest is the exploration of strategies to remove feelings of being overlooked and rejected by helping to revitalize the ministries within the church and develop outreach projects to reach all demographics inside and outside church perimeters. I want to help build a structure conducive to plans which allow for change and growth with stability, longevity, and inclusivity for all.

My educational background and leadership skills have equipped me to be able to strategize, encourage, and lead people to accomplish their goals and objectives. As I stated previously, in my ministerial and professional settings, I have executed leadership training and organized structures to support and incorporate plans set forth by leadership. I have built strategies and planning around moving a project toward deadlines and measuring the milestones. My coordination skills allow me to be able to understand what is going on in my context, what needs to happen within my context, and who and what is available to accomplish a required task within my context. My context's most significant issue is the lack of focus on the old location, and as a result, some members are feeling isolated and overlooked by the changes that have taken place within the church. I hope to

build momentum behind a well organized and effective communication platform that will distribute information properly and collect feedback from all those involved.

I want to begin by conducting interviews and surveys about how the recent changes have affected the members of my context and gain suggestions as to how we can rebuild and rid ourselves of the feeling of being overlooked. These interviews and surveys will give us some insight or a better understanding of what is going on within our context and what needs to happen for people to feel included in the process. These interviews and surveys will also help to determine which areas we need to focus on and develop strategies and plans according to those focuses.

I want to develop a plan for outreach to increase membership at the old location. The community surrounding the church has changed tremendously. The onset of regentrification in the area will allow us to reach out to a more diverse community. The building of a new warehouse and loft apartments, as well as the incorporation of many small businesses surrounding the old location, could bring about a more diverse, young adult population. This community is untapped, and developing strategies toward defined goals for outreach to this community will provide growth, vitality, and longevity.

My experience as Youth Minister has given me some insight into the mindset of this generation. Understanding the needs of this population is crucial, and we must be sensitive to them. The young adult population is drawn to community activism, and the rich history of the old location can be continued by getting young adults involved in the political and social issues surrounding the local community. These social issues could help the church remain a thriving entity within the community.

Another way I can use my ministerial and professional skills to serve the needs of my context is to bring in and utilize experienced media and technology professionals. As I stated earlier, we have individuals with untapped experience within our church context who would be willing to help with this endeavor; again, effective communication would help with bringing experienced individuals on board. By updating the technology, we will be able to promote and distribute information promptly so that members are kept up to date with the current events within the church. Experienced individuals in the technology and media field are necessary to help deliver the message through live streaming, websites, and podcasts. I have a proven ability to hire and train a diverse staff with the experience needed to be efficient and effective.

I do realize that the leadership may not adhere or welcome my ideas as well as the strategies put forth in regards to media and technology. I must keep in mind that although I am on the leadership team, I have no authority to make these changes. The pastor may not welcome my vision; if that is the case, it will be a setback for the members of my church community. How the congregation moves forward in addressing the feelings of being overlooking will lie in the hands of the leadership. The setback would not be a negative reflection on me because I am still a qualified leader, and this will not discourage me nor define my abilities to lead a church congregation toward restoration. I would proceed into this new journey with faith and confidence in who I am as a hands-on leader, problem solver, and strong communicator. These are the talents and abilities that God has placed in me. I will need all of these strengths to find a path of least resistance to restore the faith and trust of our members who have decided that inclusion may not be in their future. Finally, I believe that when they see that they have an advocate in my

leadership, I pray they will realize that a delay is not a denial and that inclusion is once again a reality.

What I seek to learn from this Doctor of Ministry project is how to become an effective leader who remains in touch with the emotional, spiritual, and developmental aspects of the people in the church and surrounding community. This project will also enable me to resolve my personal feelings of being disregarded and overlooked as I help my church and community address those issues as well. It will help me to develop strong leadership skills that can promote personal growth and enable me to become an effective leader in the church and the community.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the theme I intend to examine is how to include specific populations within my ministry context who are overlooked and left out due to the growth and expansion. For my Doctor of Ministry project, I would like to explore strategies on how to remove those feelings by addressing these needs by revitalizing the ministries within the church and developing outreach projects to reach all demographics inside and outside the church perimeters. I want to build a structure conducive to plans which allow for change and growth with stability, longevity, and inclusivity for all.

I hope that this Doctor of Ministry project will result in restored confidence of members, and for them to understand that some change is not necessarily all bad. As I previously stated, churches who fail to make the necessary adjustments to this changing environment are becoming irrelevant, obsolete, and lack the required growth to remain viable. Although change is needed, leaders must address and examine how those changes

will affect specific populations within their context. The emotional attachment to adjusting and coping with change is difficult, but it is especially problematic when individuals feel left out of the process. Building a structure that is inclusive of all within and outside the church's perimeters will benefit the church's stance in the surrounding communities.

My focus is on leadership development for youth who are considered "Generation Z." I believe that this generation is the most overlooked population in leadership within my context. They are overlooked in part because of the assumptions that they lack the knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead. Contrary to these sentiments, I believe that if this generation is trained and mentored in leadership, they will develop a skill set that will lead to continuity in leadership throughout the church. My desire to gain a better understanding of God's use of this generation and its effectiveness in leading. There is a place for them in ministry, and it's not in the background or off to the side. They can no longer be held to the adage of "children should be seen and not heard." This generation has much to offer, and with the proper guidance, they can lead and be effective in ministry. Therefore, my project's title will be "*Generation Z: A Seat at the Table.*"

## CHAPTER TWO

## BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The biblical foundations of the project, *"Generation Z: A Seat at the Table,"* will begin with a study of 1 Samuel 16:1-13. This text is considered for examination to help substantiate the argument for not overlooking this generation in leadership. This project is shaped through the intentional call for young people interested in leadership to be trained and developed and ultimately mentored for leadership roles at First Baptist Church of South Richmond. In this biblical study, there will be textual analyses coupled with the works and writings of biblical scholars who have studied these passages extensively.

As the oldest child of five children in the household of my mother and stepfather, I was a child who received the least amount of support and attention. Often this left me feeling heartbroken, inferior, and overlooked. Being overlooked is a scenario that often plays itself out in so many families, corporations, and churches. As one who has felt the pain of being overlooked, I can attest that the circumstances result in plaguing one's sense of self-worth and can cause considerable harm to the human soul. I was always wrestling with hope, security, belonging, and love; being overlooked can be frustrating; it's devaluing and invalidating.

## Introduction

There are numerous occasions in which an individual can be overlooked; being viewed as less competent than you are is one of those occasions. 1 Samuel 16:1-13 is the story of David and the experiences he had, which can be viewed as an example of how one can be a victim of being overlooked. The authorship of 1 Samuel is uncertain; many biblical scholars, including Bruce Birch, Ralph Klein, and P. Kyle McCarter, attribute the writing to at least three authors. They believe the writing is a collection of many stories written over many years. Everett Fox and other biblical scholars believe that 1 Samuel was recorded during the "stretch from settlement (the books of Joshua and Judges) through monarchy and eventually collapse several hundred years later (Kings), it reflects a people's struggle with what it means to ask for leadership, how the leaders measure up to the task, and how the ideals of a culture fare in the process."[1]

First Samuel is a book about three men: Samuel, the prophet and king-maker; Saul, the people's choice as king; and David, God's heir-presumptive, who would succeed Saul.[2] The fact that the people chose Saul as king is a contrast to God's choice of David to succeed Saul; that is, since God had already chosen a successor to Saul, it is a reason to believe that Saul's chastisement and rejection caused Saul to be overlooked. The rejection and "overlooking" of Saul's leadership paved the way for the rise of David. David's anointing in 1 Samuel 16:1-13 is an important introduction to the history of David. Birch reminds us that this introduction does not focus on David as an established royal figure, because, after all, David's family tree is not as distinguished as Saul's. His

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[1] Everett Fox, *Give Us a King: Saul, Samuel, and David* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1999), xvi.

[2] Gordon J. Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom: The Message of 1 Samuel* (Welwyn, UK: Evangelical Press, 1988), 12.

father's grandmother, Ruth, was an immigrant, and his grandfather, Boaz, had ancestors, which included a Canaanite woman who was almost executed for adultery (Tamar) and a Canaanite prostitute from Jericho. In a world of power arrangements, this would not be the stuff of royal lineage.[3] However, Brueggemann reminds us that David's story is one that is celebrated by the marginal, who find hope in the early David stories for their marginalization. As a marginal figure—a nobody, his successes were resented by the established power that needed his leadership.[4] Based on the disrespect shown to David by his relatives, as an underdog and outcast, it is in my view that he was being disregarded and overlooked.

The overlooking of David in 1 Samuel 16:1-13 gives a glimpse into how the prophet Samuel, David's father, Jesse, and the elders of Bethlehem could not see David as God's choice for the next king of Israel. The good news and blessing are that God is not a respecter of persons; that is, as Gordon J. Keddie points out, while a man looks at the outward appearance, the Lord looks at the heart. However, great the wisdom, however fine the ability to judge character, we are always looking on the outside. We look at the outward evidence of people's lives and reason our way into their character. The truth is Christians cannot read the heart and are limited to the reasoning of what they can see into what they can never see![5] In this text, the issue is not about David's subsequent behavior; the issue is "right seeing," seeing as God sees.

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[3] Bruce Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 1100.

[4] Walter Brueggeman, *David's Truth in Israel's Imagination and Memory* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 19-23.

[5] Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom*, 157.

First Samuel 16:1-13 reveals God's intentionality in ensuring that His influence determines future leadership by identifying who will be competent in serving Him. God humbled Samuel and the others by telling them the truth about the limitations of human discernment. The choice of David showed God looking toward Israel's future, providing a leader with a heart for Him, and demonstrating how that leadership can be found in the person who is presumed to be the smallest, weakest, and, therefore, most overlooked. Whatever God saw in David, he showed the promise of love for God and a willingness to live by God's instructions.

## Exegetical Analysis

God's provision of a king indicates that He had not overlooked the needs of His people. As Birch writes in *The First and Second Books of Samuel,* God says to Samuel: "I have provided for myself a king among Jesse's sons." Twice in this chapter, the verb *ra'a* is used with the specialized meaning of "provide"—seeing in the sense of discerning or choosing.[6] The Hebrew Bible term "provided" is key to this story. The reality of God's future for Israel does not always appear clear to human eyes, even to those of a prophet.[7] God's provision indicates that He had not overlooked the needs of His people even though they overlooked Him with their request of a king. It signals that God has "seen" the people's need even before they were aware of it. Keddie writes, "As God had done in the past, God was again venturing out ahead of the people, authoring the scroll of their

[6] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1097-1100.

[7] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1097.

story before it had yet been unrolled. God's guidance is usually not as discernable at the moment as it is in hindsight."[8]

In other words, we may not sense (see or hear) what God is doing in our midst or how God is leading us. Perhaps these thoughts by Rolf Jacobson can help us understand. In his commentary on 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Jacobson wrote, "Samuel is relying on his human sense of vision, which will not do for the work of God."[9] It appears that Samuel did not see or hear what God was doing. This story affirms that God's "providence" operates beyond the spectrum in which humanity's sight operates, but even so, they remain within God's view.[10] The persons in this story apparently did not understand how God was providing for Israel in a good way, and how God's eyes were always on the people as a whole and not merely on the individuals.

God's act of seeing might be depicted and conceptualized in Samuel as His act of provision in these intersecting senses. J. Randall Short suggests that it is reasonable to understand Yahweh's announcement in 1 Samuel—that "I have provided myself a king"—as meaning that here, too, in His foresight, He has already prepared and supplied (that is, provided) Himself with the object that He needs (a king) for His purposes. Short continues by stating that in this case, the object of Yahweh's provision (a king for Himself, at this point) will also, in time, become the subject, means, or agent of His provision for His people. God had already begun grooming and preparing David to lead

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[8] Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom*, 157.

[9] Rolf Jacobson, "Commentary on 1Samuel 16:1-13," *Working Preacher*, March 2, 2008, accessed April 7, 2019, http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx/commentary.

[10] Jacobson, "Commentary on 1 Samuel 16:1-13," accessed April 7, 2019, http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx/commentary.

his people long before he was introduced in this narrative. David's preparation was necessary to fulfill God's purpose, and it was an unmistaken sign of God's provision.[11]

However, God's foresight and provision are not apparent to Samuel. Samuel's problem, as stated earlier, is that he is relying on his human sense of vision. In 1 Samuel 9:19, Samuel referred to himself as a "seer," literally a "see-er." Samuel's job was not so much to see as to listen: "you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." The message is clear; when dealing with matters of God's actions and will, we rely on our sight for almost everything, but it often proves untrustworthy.[12]

In the Old Testament context, the prophets were set apart to see and communicate God-given visions to the people. The primary character in this story is Samuel, the prophet who is God's agent to anoint, reject, or confirm. In chapter sixteen, the prophetic interests are still apparent, but the portrait of Samuel as an individual performing the prophetic role is less than flattering.[13] He seems old and passive, unable to see as God wishes him to see.[14]

Samuel's passiveness was understandable due to his grieving for Saul because as Samuel grieved for Saul, he no doubts grieved for a nation thrown into a lamentable position of having a king who, in God's eyes, was no better than a usurper and a despot.

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[11] J. Randall Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 2010).

[12] Jacobson, "Commentary on 1 Samuel 16:1-13," accessed April 7, 2019, http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx/commentary.

[13] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1097-1100.

[14] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1099.

So, the Lord rebukes the prophet for his moping over the state of things and tells him to go to Jesse of Bethlehem, for he had "chosen one of his sons to be king" (16:1).[15]

Samuel may have been paralyzed with mourning because of Saul's tragic rebellion, but God was not paralyzed. God had already looked ahead into Israel's future, and He will never allow His work to die with the death or failure of a man. David Guzik reminds us that if it is God's work, it goes beyond any man. Often we find ourselves trapped or stuck in mourning over past failures, but God wants us to move on.[16] God wants His leaders of today to understand that as humans, we will fail from time to time. However, we must continue to press forward to an empowering picture of tomorrow. The empowering picture can begin with the preparation, guidance, and training of our future leaders. The young David was under God's providential care for his personal development. Our future leaders must also be under our providential care. The providential care and guidance will allow for the continuity and security of the future. God had already looked into the future of Israel, and the choice was made. The future of Israel lies with the young David, God's choice. The church must also look toward the future and make a choice not to overlook this generation in leadership.

Nevertheless, God's provision causes Samuel to express fear. Instead of moving forward and trusting in God, Samuel is consumed with fear. In verse two, Samuel says, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me!" Samuel's reaction is no different than many of our reactions when God gives us a new directive. We often overlook the fact that God is a God of new things, and he is venturing ahead. Most of us become

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[15] Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom*, 155.

[16] David Guzik, "Study Guide for 1 Samuel 16," *Bible.org*, accessed April 7, 2019, bible.org/guzik-david/studyguride-1sa/1sa-16cfm.

fearful like Samuel and would rather hold on to our traditions, overlooking the possibilities of how forward movement can secure our future. Samuel is overlooking the fact that God's track record is incredible, and instead of questioning God, he must continue to trust God. Samuel is overlooking the fact that God has given him numerous examples of how He never starts something He cannot finish. He never moves without purpose; He never fails, and He is faithful. Nonetheless, fear seems to be the frame of mind of Samuel.

In contrast, Short questions Samuel's fears by stating that Samuel had already stood in the presence of Saul and taken the final steps to transfer the kingdom to Saul's "neighbor." God's commissioning of Samuel to go and anoint is merely the next step that Samuel has already indicated would be taken. Why, then, does Samuel, who has stood fearlessly in front of Saul's presence and pronounced God's rejection of him on more than one occasion, now fear for his life on this occasion? Short's explanation is that perhaps Samuel has simply grown fearful because of the increasing enmity between Saul and him. Or, perhaps there is no rational explanation for his fear of man above the fear of God, especially for the prophet of God; whereas, the typical explanation for Samuel's fear seems to be based primarily on the principle of human analogy—that is, on how we might expect anyone to react in the face of such a command.[17]

Klein writes that Samuel expressed his fears over this mission just as Moses and Jeremiah objected to the divine commissioning. Samuel's fears were plausible; after

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[17] Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David*, 161.

anointing, a new king would be considered treasonous by the incumbent Saul. Yahweh responded to the objection by instructing Samuel to take along an animal for a sacrifice.[18]

Birch points in the same direction and describes Samuel's fears by Samuel's response: "If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." To anoint a new king while Saul still physically occupies the throne would be treason. God instructs Samuel to take a heifer along so that he can claim to be journeying to Bethlehem for a sacrifice, but once there, the purpose is clear. Samuel is to invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice and anoint the one God names. God almost seems indulgent with Samuel in saying, "I will tell you what to do."[19]

Birch points out that God's instructions, "I will tell you what to do," falsely suggest that God has participated in a lie. As in 9:19-24, the anointing would almost certainly have been accompanied by sacrifice and ritual eating together. God appears to be simply instructing Samuel on practicalities that he seems unable to decide for himself in his fearful state. In effect, he is told by God, "You don't have to confess treason, Samuel. Tell them something acceptable."[20] In chapter eight, God was willing to step back a little to let the people chart the course they demanded; that time has now ended. God is firmly in authority of the course of events this time. Kingship will have a new basis in God's initiative, not in that of the people. [21]

Upon Samuel's arrival in Bethlehem, fear seems to be the frame of mind of the elders as well. The question in verse four, "Are you coming in peace?" is a clear

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[18] Ralph W. Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 10, *1 Samuel*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 160.

[19] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1098.

[20] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1098.

[21] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1098.

indication that the elders are concerned about Samuel's visit. The elders seem less afraid of Samuel but more in fear of the controversy he might bring in their midst. The elders are not overlooking the fact that Samuel was is in conflict with Saul, and their estrangement could cause problems for their small clan.

Klein interprets the elders' fear by stating that their trembling may reflect their general reverence for Samuel. Still, it also shows a good deal of apprehension, also reflected in their question, "Are you coming in peace?" Mauchline suggests that they thought they had incurred the prophet's displeasure, for which they would be punished, but perhaps fear about the political implications of his visit was on their minds.[22]

While Klein and Birch's assumptions have merit, Short points out that the relative insignificance of Bethlehem is reflected, intentionally or not, in the trembling elders' obvious alarm and fear over receiving a visit from the man who speaks the pronouncement of God and is known as a king-maker. "Who are we, and what have we done to merit a visit from Yahweh's seer?" appears to be the question underlying their tremulous greeting. The leaders of Jesse's hometown reacting this way to a visit from Samuel reflects he suggests, their estimation of their city's worthiness to receive visits—expected or unexpected—from the prophet Samuel. His visit is neither anticipated nor met with joy.[23]

The elders' feelings of unworthiness are unwarranted because the next king of Israel would come from the smallest clan in Judah. It is Bethlehem that Samuel was sent to look for the man who would be king. Many overlook the fact that this is the same Bethlehem of which the scripture says, "Though you are small among the clans of Judah,

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[22] Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary,* 160.

[23] Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David*, 162.

out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel" (Mic. 5:2, Matt. 2:6). This scripture serves as a reminder that we should never overlook the presumed smallest and weakest because God chooses the weakest of the world to shame the strong. Samuel reassures the elders and disavows their unworthiness and fear by urging them to prepare themselves for approaching God, and then asks them to either come to the sacrifice or forget their apprehensions and rejoice with the seer.

The rest of this narrative makes extensive use of the theme of "right seeing." Birch writes that in this drama, Jesse and his sons seem to be the only persons with Samuel. The sons of Jesse are brought before Samuel one at a time. In verse six, Samuel sees Eliab, the eldest, and Samuel is ready to choose him, but the issue is proper "seeing." The text says that Samuel "looked on Eliab" and thought that Eliab surely must be the Lord's anointed. God immediately replies with a rebuke. Samuel, God warns, must not "look" at appearance or stature. The verb here is (*nabat*) rather than *ra'a* "to see." The implication may be that Samuel was "looking" but not really "seeing." Eliab was handsome and tall like Saul, but such matters of appearance did not justify a decision. God pronounces Eliab to be "rejected," the same term used of Saul in 15:23,26, when he was "rejected" as king. It is also the same word used in 8:7 to describe the people's "rejection" of God as king.[24]

Eliab's likeness regarding Saul has caused him to be overlooked. Eliab cannot move Israel beyond the stalemates of "rejection." Mettinger has suggested that "Eliab is something of a 'new Saul,' so that in his rejection, Saul is denounced in effigy."[25] He

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[24] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1098.

[25] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1098.

further suggests that the process here is something like the choice of Saul by lots. As each son is brought forward, Samuel, in some manner, determines a divine judgment of "yes" or "no." As with Saul, Samuel almost took Eliab's stature as the sign of his chosenness.[26]

However, since the term "see" may not be clear to everyone, perhaps the following can provide further clarification. Klein writes that beginning with verse six; the narrative makes extensive use of the verb "see." Samuel (the seer) saw Eliab and concluded that he was Yahweh's anointed, but it turned out he was not the one whom Yahweh had seen and elected as his anointed. In the thirty-four times in which "anointed" is used of a royal person, it always appears with the name Yahweh or possessive pronouns referring to Him. That is, one is called "anointed" in the Old Testament by virtue of one's being anointed by Yahweh, and not because one has been anointed by the elders or the people.[27] Again, the issue here is seeing as God sees and anointing the one God tells Samuel to anoint. Klein continues by arguing that Yahweh urged Samuel not to look at a candidate's appearance or his stature, the very things which had made Saul stand out (9:2; 10:23)! The eldest son, Eliab, had been rejected. People, Samuel is reminded, are impressed by what is on the surface; Yahweh perceives what the person is really like. Jesse paraded all the rest of his sons before Samuel, and each time the prophet remarked that Yahweh had not chosen the identified son.[28]

Ironically, Samuel was not seeing as God sees; his vision is impaired by his expectations for Israel's next king—who, apart from Yahweh's word, he sees as any other man—as well as his failure to wait for Yahweh first to declare to him whom he is to

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[26] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 1098.

[27] Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 160.

[28] Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 160.

anoint, as he was instructed before going to Bethlehem. Short argues that perhaps it is because of Samuel's mistaken certainty about Jesse's firstborn as the most natural and obvious choice for king, and perhaps it is because of an implicit contrast between Eliab and Saul, but Yahweh's reaction against Eliab is stated more strongly than with the others to follow. Whatever the case, with each passing son of Jesse in this drama, Samuel is being educated to see as God sees.[29]

Short argues in his book, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David*, that Yahweh emphasized that He will tell Samuel what to do; that is, whom to anoint. Samuel is presumptuous, however, and he allows his sight to guide him in identifying the one whom Yahweh has seen. When Samuel sees Eliab, Samuel—and not Yahweh—says confidently that Yahweh's anointed is there before Him. What follows is a pedagogical moment for Samuel. Yahweh instructs Samuel that he is using the wrong criteria—all based on sight according to the human perspective.[30] Short continues by saying that Samuel cannot identify Yahweh's anointed based on "his appearances," "the height of his standing," or "the outward appearances," for it was not these that caught Yahweh's attention, but rather, "the heart." The chief criterion for Yahweh's choice of His king is neither pedigree nor physical appearance nor anything else visible to the human eye; it is the heart.[31]

The crucial qualities of a good ruler lie within the heart. The heart is the constituent part of the human spirit, which is the seat of the intellect, moral judgments, piety, and feelings. We generally select leaders based on appearance, educational

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[29] Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David*, 163.

[30] Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David*, 146.

[31] Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David*, 148.

background, work experience, and other useful criteria. While those things are important, their merits are secondary to what the Lord requires. When God chose David, He wanted a man who understood his need to be a man "after God's own heart." The Lord found those attributes in David, who was the least of his brothers and a humble shepherd who did not aspire to greatness. David was a man after God's own heart, not because he was perfect but because he was sensitive to the Spirit of the Lord.

Verse ten summarizes the rest of the proceedings concerning the divine rejection of David's brothers. None of the seven is acceptable.[32] At this point, Samuel is perplexed because he does not see among Jesse's sons the one in which Yahweh has chosen. Upon questioning Jesse, Samuel discovers that Jesse has one more son, but he is not present. He was not called to the sacrifice, as Samuel had instructed. Jesse answers, "There remains the youngest, but he is tending the sheep" (1 Sam. 16:11). Jesse thought such little account of his youngest that he left him out in the field tending sheep instead of inviting him to the sacrifice. Not only does he overlook David and leave him out in the field, but he also does not offer to send for him, nor does he call him by name. Jesse is indicating by his actions and response to Samuel why it is unnecessary to even at that moment for the eighth son to appear before the prophet.

Short makes a point that, similar to Jesse's unprompted calling and parading his other sons before Samuel one by one, Jesse does not treat David in the same way. Not only must Samuel ask Jesse if these are all of his sons, but when Jesse replies to Samuel that "there remains the least" and he shows no inclination towards calling David, Samuel must also tell Jesse, with some urgency, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down until

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[32] Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1 Samuel- 2 Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins, 2010), 684.

his arrival here." The denouncement of the revelation that David was not amongst those called, and the likely possibility that Jesse still thinks David's place is with the sheep and not with the prophet, dramatically demonstrates how Jesse, and probably his first seven sons, overlook David.[33] All this unfolding drama of rejection, and the revelation that "the least" has not been called and is not present, demonstrates the surprise and wonder that Yahweh has seen the one who is overlooked instead of any of the rest.

Samuel asked for the boy to be fetched before the rite continued. Klein contends that we cannot be sure whether Samuel refused to sit down or whether he refused to make a procession around the altar before David's arrival. The translation, "we will not go ahead," is intended to be ambiguous. Klein continues by stating that when David was ushered in, his good looks—despite what had been said in verse seven—confirmed that he was Yahweh's choice. Yahweh gave orders for Samuel to anoint David in verse twelve, just as he had promised he would in verse three. Samuel anointed him with his horn of oil in verse thirteen, forming an inclusion with verse one. The rite took place privately, or even secretly, yet still in the presence of his brothers.[34]

The secrecy of David's anointing, in contrast, shows how being overlooked can be an advantage. God has to do some more work with David, and He needs that time to get David ready for kingship. Keddie argues that it seems clear that the precise import of the consecration remains hidden. God was deliberately cautious in declaring his purposes and exposing David to the attention of Saul.[35]

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[33] Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David*, 151-152.

[34] Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 161-162.

[35] Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom*, 159.

Even though David's anointing was performed in private, Klein states that the Spirit of Yahweh rushed on David as it had on Saul, but the gift of the Spirit in 11:6 is not directly connected to Saul's anointing. With David, the Spirit seems to be almost a direct result of the anointing, and it lasted permanently, not spasmodically, as it had with Saul. While historical and chronological reasons may lie behind these distinctions, a comparison of the present accounts of Saul and David's anointings demonstrates the superiority of David's spirit endowment, both in its close connection with anointing and in its permanence.[36]

Ronald F. Youngblood writes that Samuel requests that Jesse sends someone to bring David in from the field. Ironically, David, while presumably not as tall, immediately presents a striking appearance. Although physical attractiveness is by no means a necessary attribute for a king, it is elevated to the status of an important characteristic, if not a prerequisite. David has "a fine appearance," "beautiful eyes," and "handsome features." Since the phrases are virtually synonymous, their elements are, therefore, interchangeable. No sooner was David brought into Samuel's presence than the Lord commanded Samuel to anoint him as Israel's next ruler in verse twelve. "He is the one," literally, "He is this one." Reminiscent not only of "not… this one," "not…these," of verses eight through ten concerning David's older brothers, but also of "This is the man [who]…will govern," concerning Saul. If Saul, at one time, had been God's choice, David is now unquestionably the chosen one.[37]

Youngblood continues by stating that the narrator links Samuel's anointing of David ("in the presence of his brothers," so that there might be witnesses and also to

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[36] Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 161-162.

[37] Youngblood, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 686.

make it clear that David, although the youngest of Jesse's sons, is truly God's choice) with David's accession of the Spirit of the Lord (verse thirteen). Anointing with oil thus symbolized anointing with the Holy Spirit. In David's case, the divine accession was permanent, while elsewhere, the same Hebrew verb allows for the Spirit to come and go.[38]

Short points in the same direction in regards to David's appearances. He writes that the sight of David is impressive enough to merit description. This time, however, it is not his size nor stature that catches the eye, and it is Yahweh, not Samuel, who speaks and says, "this is he," the one whom Samuel is to anoint. Only after receiving Yahweh's confirming word can Samuel be certain that he has seen the one whom Yahweh has first seen "among Jesse's sons, and he proceeds to anoint him there "amid his brothers." The spirit of Yahweh "rushed upon David" from that day on, and Samuel, his business now complete, departs for Ramah.[39]

Short summarizes the initial and surprising emergence of the overlooked and the least of Jesse's sons to some position of prominence to his brothers as they begin receding into the background. It is important to note that by the end of the account, David's brothers are identified by their relationship to David and not by their birth order. At the end of the report, David is the only one among them who is named. There is a progression in this public confirmation. At the beginning of the account, only Yahweh sees David in an elevated position and not the other sons of Jesse. Next, Samuel perceives David's identity only after Jesse points to the remaining son tending the sheep,

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[38] Youngblood, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 686.

[39] Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David*, 152.

and when he sees his beautiful eyes. However, David is confirmed for Samuel as the one whom Yahweh has first seen among Jesse's sons only by word of Yahweh: "Rise and anoint him, for this is he." That is unless Yahweh's word, "this is he," comes by way of an ocular device in response to an audible inquiry by Samuel. David is first set apart in view of all the other worshippers—certainly his father and brothers, but perhaps the elders and their families as well—when Samuel takes the oil and anoints "him in the midst of his brothers," and perhaps subsequently through some visible manifestation of Yahweh's Spirit rushing upon him. It is at this point that David is finally named for the readers. [40]

## Conclusion

Upon critical analysis of the selected scriptures, it can be concluded that there is a solid biblical foundation laid that will support this project, *Generation Z: A Seat at the Table*. The disregard of David as the next king of Israel reminds us that we should not overlook the least and the young when it comes to identifying future leaders. The young David was overlooked as Israel's next king through the eyes of the prophet Samuel, David's father Jesse, and the elders in the village. They overlooked the fact that David, the eighth son and a shepherd boy, who spent a considerable amount of time in one place, doing a good job, being faithful, and working diligently, could potentially become the next king of Israel. The pastures were David's training ground and helped him to develop a certain skill set that is required for kingship. David spent a lot of time shepherding, protecting, defending, gathering, and caring for his father's sheep. These are all skills required of a king, but his skill sets were overlooked. The isolated pastures were David's

[40] Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David,* 153.

training ground, and those same isolated pastures are where David spent a lot of time with God and developed a heart for Him.

Just as Samuel and Jesse overlooked David's skills, our leaders overlook the fact that this generation spends a lot of time in Bible study, singing in the choirs, ushering, and working in various ministries within the church. These experiences have been their training ground, and out of those experiences, they have developed some untapped skills and abilities. The church is a place where we can mold and develop their God-given skills and abilities. In addition, this generation has a strong sense of wanting to make a difference and thinking that they can contribute. They want to take on a more active role in their communities and their futures.[41] Many of them have unique abilities, and skill sets that, if enhanced, can make them future leaders within the church as well as in the community. In the case of David, God had some testing and refining to do before he would be king. This generation will need some testing and refining before they can lead.

The church must not become leaders like Samuel and Jesse and overlook this generation because of their lack of knowledge, commitment, and maturity. That would be a mistake because their perspective can bring about a new dynamic that lends itself to new thoughts and ideas. This new dynamic can help propel ministry leadership into the future. This generation should have a seat at the table when it comes to planning and discussing the future vision of the church.

The text in 1 Samuel 16:1-13 lays a solid biblical foundation that will support this project for training, developing, and mentoring youth leaders. Prayerfully, by designing their model of leadership, they will understand what is required of a leader, and they will

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[41] Tessa Landrum, "Generation Z is spiritually illiterate and abandoning the church: How did we get here?" accessed April 9, 2020. https://kentuckytoday.com/stories/gen-z-is-spiritually-illiterate-and-abandoning-the-church-how-did-we-get-here.23397.

measure up to it. All of this will ensure continuity and effectiveness within the church. If God can produce young leaders and train Samuel to "see" them, shouldn't we be receptive to "seeing" the youth leaders that God produces?

In the next chapter, I will use the Women's Liberation movement as a pedagogical approach to how overlooking a particular segment of the population can have a detrimental effect on the overall goal of an organization.

# CHAPTER THREE

## HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The old fifteenth English proverb, "Children should be seen and not heard," seeks to produce an anti-reality where the natural ability of youth to lead and organize is something that is actively suppressed. By limiting and ignoring their voices is the thought in constructing the project, "*Generation Z: A Seat At The Table.*" It is important to note that the essence of this project is centered around overlooking this generation in leadership. The continued effectiveness of any organized church depends upon the ability to provide effective leadership by investing in individuals within the organization so that they will be useful in fulfilling essential roles, allowing for continuity and performance. Investing in this generation can help them to develop a living and serving relationship with Jesus Christ, and in turn, they can lead others in a serving relationship as well.

Identifying and providing opportunities for leadership through development and training helps this generation to recognize themselves as contributors within the church, ultimately resulting in loyalty to the organization and its mission. In a study carried out by Search Institute shows that the more time this generation give in service to the community through their congregation, the greater their loyalty and bonding to the church, which means that as this generation experience meaningful service and the resulting impact on their life, they become more loyal to the organization providing the

opportunity.[1] When one fail to include this generation as contributors within the organization, the results can be disturbing and can lead to a lack of support for the overall mission of the organization.

The lack of support is partly due to young people feeling disengaged and powerless to bring about change. When given the power to lead, young people feel connected to the organization and have a sense of purpose. History has shown that when young people are connected, and their voices heard, they become a catalyst for change. The Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War Protest, Tiananmen Square, Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and the Parkland shootings were all successful movements throughout history that had young people at the forefront, leading the charge. Even biblically, God used the young to change the Old Testament world. God used David, Esther, Josiah, and Jeremiah to lead battles, save nations, and to preach his truth.

When this generation is taken seriously, the church will thrive. If not, the church will eventually die. Leaders must unleash this generation so that they can help build the church of tomorrow. Leaders cannot afford to lose the church of tomorrow because they are not taking them seriously today—most young people who put their faith in Jesus experience the Holy Spirit and have spiritual gifts. The church must recognize that this generation is looking for a cause that matters and a community that cares.

The church community that cares must rethink the ways they do church, especially when it comes to planning the future vision of the church. If not, we are providing this generation a disservice by continuing to follow a traditional path for a world that no longer exists. David Kinnaman, President of the Barna Group, poses this

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[1] Merton Strommen, Karen Jones, and Dave Rahn, *Youth Ministry That Transforms: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Hopes, Frustrations and Effectiveness of Today's Youth Workers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 186-187.

question, "Are we making disciples for Jerusalem when we need to be making disciples for Babylon?"[2] The church community has something to offer this diverse, fluid, emphatic, anxious generation growing up in digital Babylon: hope.[3] It begins with investing and providing leadership opportunities that will allow their voices to be heard and allowing them a seat at the table when it comes to future planning and vision of the church.

Although there are numerous examples of young people leading in the twenty-first century, the requirements for this historical chapter is that it must be approximately one hundred years beginning with the twentieth century. During that time, there weren't any youth movements that underscored the consequences derived from being overlooked. For this chapter, I will use the women's liberation movement as a teaching model to demonstrate the harmful and detrimental effects of being overlooked for this project, "Generation Z: A Seat at the Table." This chapter aims to compare the overlooking of women of color from the women's movement to that of the overlooking of Generation Z.

*Introduction*

Ignoring and excluding Generation Z in leadership due to their perceived lack of intelligence, physical and moral abilities are the same injustices women have dealt with for centuries. History is filled with examples of how women are overlooked and excluded by society. From biblical times until the present, women have been ignored due to their perceived lack of capabilities.

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[2] The Barna Group, *Generation Z: The Culture, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Ventura, CA: The Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, 2018), 10.

[3] The Barna Group, *Generation Z*, 10.

Women have been fighting this injustice for years, and it has become the foundation for the Women's Liberation Movement. The movement's central argument is that women are just as capable as men and should be afforded all the rights of men. Although this argument became the foundation, it was flawed by overlooking the issues of the marginalized, and the women of color. It appeared on the surface to be a white woman's mantra for her rights while ignoring the problems affecting the poor and marginalized. The women's liberation movement benefited from the black freedom struggles of the abolitionist and the civil rights leaders, yet there remained racist and sexist undertones surrounding women of color.

Nancy A. Hewitt's article, "Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor," she writes that women in the Second Wave of the women's liberation movement viewed themselves as improving upon, not just building on, the wave that preceded them. Thus, even as advocates of women's liberation in the 1960s and 1970s eagerly sought out foremothers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they frequently insisted that they were broader in their sensitivities to race, class, and sexual politics than earlier activists. Indeed, while celebrating individual foremothers who represented racial, class, and ideological diversity, most Second Wave feminists, came to identify the First Wave as comprised mainly of white, middle-class women focused on achieving narrowly defined political goals, most notably suffrage.[4]

Hewitt points out that the Second Wave claimed to be more inclusive and more transformative with the thought that was broader in their vision, more global in their concerns, and more progressive in their sensitivities to transnational, multiracial, and

[4] Nancy A. Hewitt, "Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor," *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2002).

sexual politics. However, in reality, they were also limited in their focus and still comprising of mostly white women, and a middle class focused narrowly on issues of equality and access and not inclusivity and transformative strategies.[5]

Marbley echoes similar sentiments in her article, "African American Women's Feelings on Alienation from Third -Wave Feminism: A Conversation with My Sisters." She writes, "historically, middle-class white women have not appreciated the difference among themselves, Black women, and other women of color. Nor have they acknowledged the unique challenges and issues confronting women of color as multiple oppressed people in terms of the impact of racism and sexism. The pervasiveness of racism and sexism that existed in the Black and women's liberation movements rendered Black women almost nonexistent in both worlds."[6]

Marbley continues by stating that as a consequence, those racist and sexist narratives remain in the consciousness of the present-day African American feminists, and this memory continues to be a strong force in alienating African American women and other women of color from white organizations. Their lack of participation with white women's liberation has been costly and detrimental to African American and white women's gains regarding gender issues.[7]

Marbley and Hewitt's sentiments about the movement not being inclusive and less transformative are similar to Generation Z's assessment of the church. For Generation Z, the idea of "acceptance" is often interchangeable with the concept of

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[5] Hewitt, "Feminist Frequencies."

[6] Aretha Faye Marbley, "African-American Women's Feelings on Alienation from Third-Wave Feminism: A Conversation with My Sisters," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 605.

[7] Marbley, "African-American Women's Feelings."

"affirmation." Generation Z is developing in a time when diversity is a fundamental concept, and inclusivity is part of the mainstream. Because they are becoming the most diverse population, and their diversity leads to being "accepting" and "inclusive." Unlike the white feminist who lacks sensitivities to race, class, and sexual preference, Gen Zer's accepting nature leads to the strong support of things such as gay marriage and transgender rights. They are connected to people around them and aware of the world beyond themselves.[8]

If the church want to help Generation Z find a way to integrate their faith with their everyday experiences, churches are going to have to make a lot of changes. When this generation enters a church, they look at the congregation and the leadership, and if the church does not represent the diversity present in their world, they are going to feel strange, especially to those who did not grow up in the church. Because so many of them have not grown up in the church, and they will think that the church is a strange place where everyone looks the same. They might think that the church is not for me. When it comes to engaging Generation Z, we need digital and physical connections. One is the invitation, and the other is the follow-up.[9]

Thus, the purpose behind this argument is to highlight how overlooking the marginalized, and women of color in the movement resulted in alienation, division, and lack of support. This information can teach the church that if they want to retain this generation, they must be more inclusive in their dialog so that they don't alienate them due to their lack the sensitivities to race, class, and sexual preference.

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[8] James Emery White, "Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World", (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), pg.46.

[9] "What Pastors Should Know About Generation Z." *Christian News*. accessed April 5, 2020. https://www.blackchristiannews.com/2019/08/what-pastors-should-know-about-generation-z/.

*The History*

The pretext to modern feminism can be found in Abigail Adam's famous appeal to "Remember the Ladies." This appeal reflects the status and sentiments of women in eighteenth-century America. In a letter written on March 31, 1776, to her husband John, Abigail urges him and other members of the Continental Congress not to forget about the nation's women in their fight for independence from Great Britain. Abigail argued that the laws of the new nation should recognize women as something more than property and protect them from the arbitrary and unrestrained power men held over them. Abigail Adams' thoughts provide a distinctive lens through which to look at issues of power, quite different from the more commonly considered perspective of the Founders. In the following excerpt, Abigail shifts her focus from human nature and the need to restrain it to women and the need to protect them.[10] In one of her known quotations, she urges her husband John to "Remember the Ladies." The future First Lady wrote in part,

> I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention are not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.[11]

Abigail's letter was a private first step in the fight for equal rights for women. The next step came in the nineteenth and twentieth century, where vital political and social changes provided women with opportunities that were not present during the eighteenth

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[10] Majorie Spruill, "Abigail Adams and "Remember the Ladies," accessed March 28, 2019, https://www.americanclass.org/abigail-adams-and-remember-the ladies/.

[11] "Abigail Adams Urges Husband to Remember the Ladies," *History.com*, accessed March 15, 2018, https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/abigail/adams-urges-husband-to-remember-the-ladies.

century. Women such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Alice Paul led the initial petition for woman's suffrage.

Minister writes that in the 1960s, the so-called Second Wave Feminist such as Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem picked up the mantle and galvanized a generation to work for women's abortion and labor rights. Although these women made it possible for other women to sit in Congress, run for president, and educate young people, black feminist have called for an exploration of the racist and classist underbelly of the women's liberation movements—tales told from the perspective of those left on the margins—as mostly white, educated feminists pursued gender equality.[12]

## First Wave of the Women's Rights Movement

In Bradford Miller's article on the Seneca Falls First Woman's Rights Convention of 1848, he writes, "In the Wesleyan Chapel at the corner of Fall and Mynderse Streets, at least two significant events occurred: for the first time recorded in American history, a woman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton publicly demanded the vote, and an African-American man, Frederick Douglas legally free only since December 1846, was the only man to support her publicly.[13] He stated that Frederick Douglass, a self-educated, relatively young man, was emerging as an essential figure in the United States abolitionist movement as a lecturer and writer. His very presence at the Seneca Falls Convention embodied a promise of fulfillment for all African American men, women, and children living at the time under the cruel restraints of the institution of slavery. Elizabeth Cady

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[12] Meredith Minister, "Religion and Disability in Early Feminism," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 2 (2013): 5.

[13] Bradford W. Miller, "Seneca Falls First Women's Rights Convention of 1848: The Sacred Rites of a Nation," *Journal of Baha'i Studies* 8, no. 3 (1998).

Stanton embodied a promise of social and personal transformation: the potential emergence of the female half of the population of the United States as self-determining citizens. Although Stanton was more closely associated with the political emancipation of white women, in tandem, the two represented the liberation of all human beings from any shackles or prejudices.[14]

In the following excerpt, Miller's gives us a detailed description of that day:

> Wednesday, July 19, 1848, the first day of the convention, was devoted to the reading and discussion of its defining document, the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments and its fifteen grieves; the presentation of eleven related resolutions, including the ninth, authored by Stanton, which demanded for women the right to vote; and the delivery of speeches by Stanton and other women's rights advocates. The convention approved the Declaration unanimously. Ten resolutions, including the demands for the right of women to personal and religious freedom, the trades and professions, equality in marriage, and the right to custody of their children, were also approved without difficulty. The resolution demanding women's rights to vote, however, met fierce resistance. By calling for women's right to vote, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had struck at the very heart of the oppression of women, making the women's movement from that point on inexorably political, no longer able to fit neatly under the banner of religious tradition. Stanton had consulted with Douglass before the resolution was read, asking for his support. When the resolution demanding women's suffrage seemed headed for defeat, Douglas's speech on its behalf stirred the audience and swung the vote. Woman, like the slave, he argued, had the right to liberty. "Suffrage," he asserted, "is the power to choose rulers and make laws and the right by which all others are secured." [15]

Miller informs us that as the editor of the Rochester antislavery publication *The North Star,* Douglass ran a lengthy editorial concerning the Seneca Falls Convention on July 28, 1848. In part, it read:

> We are not insensible that the bare mention of this truly important subject in any other than terms of contemptuous ridicule and scornful disfavor is likely to excite against us the fury of bigotry and the folly prejudice. A discussion of the rights of animals would be regarded with for more complacency by many of what are

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[14] Miller, "Seneca Falls First Women's Rights Convention of 1848."

[15] Miller, "Seneca Falls First Women's Rights Convention of 1848."

> called the "wise" and the "good" of our land, than would a discussion of the rights of women. (Qtd, in *Rights* 50).[16]

Miller says that even though Douglass is far better known for his advocacy of the rights of African Americans, he also worked assiduously for women's rights. Indeed, The North Star, first published in December 1847, carried the slogan, "Rights is of no sex." In his speaking and writing on behalf of women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery, Douglass repeatedly grounded himself at the spiritual center of what human beings have valued since the Enlightenment as being just and noble about human rights.[17]

Miller highlights that each in their way, a white woman and a black man become champions of two separate but deeply linked struggles that would revolutionize life in America. Like that of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the life and work of Frederick Douglass finally pivot on a principle of "inner" revolution. If justice, equality, and an end to prejudice are to manifest themselves in the American nation, then things must change on a political level and a personal level. In an undated speech on women's suffrage, Douglass spoke of the revolution that would follow from the granting of full rights to women:

> There is no question that if the demands of women are compiled with the full extent to which she been pleased to make them, we shall see a revolution, the most strange, radical and stupendous that the world has ever witnessed. It would equal and surpass that great struggle under Martin Luther for religious liberty (*Rights* 134).[18]

Miller compares the historic collaboration between Frederick Douglass and Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, its Declaration of Rights and

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[16] Miller, "Seneca Falls First Women's Rights Convention of 1848."

[17] Miller, "Seneca Falls First Women's Rights Convention of 1848."

[18] Miller, "Seneca Falls First Women's Rights Convention of 1848."

Sentiments; and its accompanying resolutions can be seen as equivalent to Martin Luther's 1517 posting of his ninety-five theses on the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany. It earns Stanton and Douglass and their heirs the right to initiate the young in the name of a new "ideological promise," his term for a society-anchoring set of beliefs and laws. Stanton and Douglass attempted in their careers of moral reform to dismantle the hegemony of males over females as it was rooted in the Christian tradition, as well as to abolish slavery, which also had considerable ecclesiastical support.[19]

Miller concludes by writing that years later, in a statement on the occasion of Douglass's death, Stanton said:

> He was the only man I ever saw who understood the degradation of the disenfranchisement of women. Through all the long years of our struggle, he has been a familiar figure on our platform with always an inspiring word to say. In the very first convention, he helped me to carry the resolution I had peened demanding woman suffrage. Frederick Douglass is not dead. His grand character will long be an object lesson in our National history. His lofty sentiments of liberty, justice, and equality echoed on every platform over our broad land, must influence and inspire many generations.[20]

Even though Douglass and Stanton's begin the fight for women's rights, three years later, it was the words of Sojourner Truth's that captured the crowd at a women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio in 1851. Minister writes:

> That while the keynote speaker at this convention was Frances Gage, the words of Sojourner Truth have subsequently been etched in history texts and collective imagination often under the title" Ain't I a Women?' According to records of the speech, Truth invoked her physical capabilities (Look at me, Look at my arm"), referred to her strength and need for food ("I can eat as much as a man"), and used biblical interpretation to argue for women's rights. Truth's reference to her black, female body challenged religious discourses that regarded women as weak

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[19] Miller, "Seneca Falls First Women's Rights Convention of 1848."

[20] Miller, "Seneca Falls First Women's Rights Convention of 1848."

> and susceptible to temptations and cultural discourses on "true womanhood." In response to these assumptions, Truth argued first that black women represented the strength of all women, a strength that equalized men and women.[21]

Minister continues with:

> Truth constructed historical female bodies as another part of this emerging discourse, thereby turning biblical interpretations on their head. Rather than accept Eve's sin as an argument against women's equality, Truth stated, "I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve caused a man to sin. Well, if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right again." According to Truth, if the first woman turned the world upside down, then it was women's responsibility, not man's, to set it right again. The first sin was, for Truth, not an occasion for female suppression but female strength.[22]

Minister reminds us that Truth's tack against the use of the fall to argue for women's inferiority, therefore, differed from Stanton's critiques of the argument that women were created inferior. Unlike Stanton, Truth did not deny the accusation but, instead, turned the allegation on its head by suggesting that if women did indeed ruin the world, then women might be able to fix it. The first sin did not suggest women's weakness but women's strength. She writes:

> Not only should women be given this chance to "set the world right again," according to Truth, but women already had. Truth stated: "And how came Jesus into the world?" Through God, who created him and a woman who bore him. Man, where is your part? In this statement, Truth overturned centuries of theological speculation by suggesting that a woman—Mary—played the key role in the enactment of redemption. Perhaps more important for her nineteenth-century context, Truth circumvented debates between white men and women regarding the masculinity or feminity of Christ by claiming that the act of redemption importance was not the death of Christ but the entrance of Christ into the world.[23]

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[21] Meredith Minister, "Religion and Disability in Early Feminism," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 2 (2013): 15.

[22] Minister, "Religion and Disability in Early Feminism," 16.

[23] Minister, "Religion and Disability in Early Feminism."

Although Truth challenged aspects of the women's movement that denied her full humanity based on either race or class, she maintained anthropology that marginalized some according to a scale of ability, and by "passing" as able-bodied, she placed herself on the top of this hierarchy.[24]

Minister reminds us that both Stanton's 1848 address in Seneca Falls and Truth's 1851 address in Akron, therefore, argued for women's equality based on women's capabilities. This line of argumentative challenged cultural and religious discourses that perceived women to be inferior to men. Still, this challenge itself was predicated on the cultural and religious discourse that assumed the superiority of able-bodied.[25]

*Alienation*

Although this fight began as a right for all women, Stanton's argument for gender equality begins to base women's capabilities on a mark that makes one person more human than another. Minister writes that a more intellectually, morally, or physically capable human being is, according to Stanton, was more valuable than a less able-bodied human being. In other words, ability or lack thereof should determine worthiness for civic engagement. Stanton's racist and classist rhetoric on ableism does not come as a surprise by anyone familiar with discourse.[26]

Minister reminds us that despite the continued power of the story related in History of Woman Suffrage, it, along with the autobiographies, speeches, and correspondence of Stanton, Alice Paul, and several other white suffrage leaders—has

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[24] Minister, "Religion and Disability in Early Feminism."

[25] Minister, "Religion and Disability in Early Feminism."

[26] Minister, "Religion and Disability in Early Feminism."

fueled a second or more critical portrait of the First Wave. This second narrative focuses on suffragist efforts to limit rights to white, educated women. It has led to broader claims that the movement was not only narrow in its goals but also racist and elitist in its vision. In this version, the few women of color who advocated women's rights, most notably Sojourner Truth, were heroic but unable to overcome the prejudices of their white counterparts.[27]

Marbley reminds us in her writings that although many African Americans shied away from feminism because they viewed all whites (regardless of sex) as having the same racist ideology, there were African American women, forerunners, and pioneers in the fight for women's rights, who were intensely concerned about women's issues. Even though African American women were worried about the problems of women's rights, they were invisible to white women and white groups. Unfortunately, as a result of this invisibility, black women's presence, participation, and contributions were overlooked, and as a result, they were alienated and not valued by white feminists.[28]

Even though African American women begin to alienate themselves, there were some white feminists and feminist scholars who are deeply concerned about the African American women's charge of racism, and yes, there were white women who understood the value of women of color.[29] A case in point, in March 1913, Ida B. Wells traveled to the first suffrage parade in Washington, D.C., an event organized by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. On the day of the parade, Wells and sixty other

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[27] Nancy A. Hewitt, "Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor," *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 662.

[28] Marbley, "African American Women's Feelings," 608.

[29] Marbley, "African American Women's Feelings," 608.

black women arrived to march with the Illinois delegation but were immediately advised, as women of color, to march in the back, not to upset the Southern delegates. Wells refused, arguing: "Either I go with you or not at all. I am not taking this stand because I wish for recognition. I am doing it for the future benefit of my whole race. Ida initially left the scene; however, she quickly returned and marched alongside her Illinois delegation, supported by her white co-suffragists Belle Squires and Virginia Brooks. This event received massive newspaper coverage and shed light on the reality for African American participation in politics."[30]

The racial tension between the white suffrage leaders and the women of color complicates the legacy of the movement as the "sisterhood" was fraught with the discrimination that existed. Despite being on the forefronts of the movement, women of color, particularly black women, were often excluded from the conversations, and their struggle for voting rights after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment is too often left out completely.

Generation Z's tension with the church is equally as complex as the tension expressed between the white suffragist and the women of color. Generation Z doesn't care much about what's said on Sunday morning if you are talking the talk and not walking to walk. They want to know the impact of faith and identity apart from a Sunday morning experience. If they don't see a transformation, they're going to question the reality of what we say we believe. They want to see how their faith speaks life into the place where they work, where they play, where they worship, and every aspect of

[30] Ida B. Wells, "Women's Suffrage Celebration Coalition of Massachusetts," accessed March 25, 2019, https://www.suffrage100ma.org/Ida-b-wells.

humanity. Whether we're ready for it or not. Generation Z is going to force us to engage the issues that matter to them.

Generation Z are comfortable with people who are different than they are and tend to be less judgemental because of those differences. White feminist disparaging thoughts about the worthiness and capabilities of the women of color are akin to the feelings that the church has about this generation. If the church continues to undervalue this generation by discrediting their intellectual, moral, and physical capabilities, they will alienate them. This generation has a lot to offer and can contribute in a meaningful way. They can teach adults about the importance of loving those who are different from them, and adults can teach this generation about a genuine Christian love that is rooted in the God of the truth. If the church continues to be judgmental and overlook them due to their capabilities, their presence, participation, and contributions will diminish. It will force them to alienate the church and take their gifts elsewhere.

## The Second Wave of the Feminist Movement

Decades earlier, the "First Wave" pushed for women's suffrage, culminating with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment that gave women the right to vote in 1920. Now a new generation took up the call for equality beyond the law and into women's lives. In 1960, the world of American women was limited in almost every aspect, from family life to the workplace.[31] Statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Labor states:

> That a woman was expected to marry in her early twenties, start a family quickly, and devote her life to homemaking. The 38 percent of the American women who worked in 1960 were primarily limited to jobs as a teacher, nurse, or secretary.

[31] "The 1960s-70s American Feminist Movement: Breaking Down Barriers for Women," Tavaana, accessed March 25, 2019, https://tavaana.org?en/case-stidies/1960s-70s-american-feminist-movement-breaking-down-barriers-women.

> Women were generally unwelcome in professional programs. As a result, in 1960, women accounted for six percent of American doctors, three percent of lawyers, and less than one percent of engineers. Working women were routinely paid lower salaries than men and denied opportunities to advance, as employers assumed they would soon become pregnant and quit their jobs, and that, unlike men, they did not have families to support.[32]

The Tavaana organization writes that in 1962 Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, captured this frustration and even despair of a generation of college-educated homemakers who felt trapped and unfulfilled. Freidan stunned the nation by contradicting the accepted wisdom that homemakers were content to serve their families and by calling on women to seek fulfillment in work outside the home. While Freidan's writing mainly spoke to an audience of educated, upper-middle-class white women, her work had such an impact that it is credited with sparking the "Second Wave" of the American feminist movement.[33]

According to the Tavaana organization, the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s initially focused on dismantling workplace inequality, such as a denial of access to better jobs and salary inequality, by way of anti-discrimination laws. In 1964, Representative Howard Smith of Virginia proposed to add a prohibition on gender discrimination into the Civil Rights Act that was under consideration. He was greeted with laughter from the other Congressman, but with leadership from Representative Martha Griffiths of Michigan, the law passed with the amendment intact.

> The article continues by informing us that it quickly became apparent that newly established law's to protect women workers would not be enforced. So a group of feminists, including Betty Friedan, decided to found an organization that would

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[32] Elaine L. Chao, "100 Years of U.S. Spending Data for the Nation, New York City, and Boston" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

[33] "The 1960s-70s American Feminist Movement," Tavaana, accessed March 25, 2019, https://tavaana.org/en/case-studies/1960s-70-american-feminist-movement-breaking-down-barriers-women.

> fight gender discrimination through the courts and legislature. In the summer of 1966, they launched the National Organization for Women (NOW), which lobby Congress for pro-equality laws and assist women seeking legal aid as they battled workplace discrimination. Betty Friedan's generation sought not to dismantle the current system but to open it up for women's participation on a public, political level. However, the more radical "women's liberation" movement was determined to utterly overthrow the patriarchy that they believed was oppressing every facet of women's lives. They popularized the idea that "the personal is political"—that women's political inequality had equally important personal ramifications, encompassing their relationships, sexuality, birth control, and abortion, clothing and body image, and roles in marriage, housework, and childcare. As such, the different wings of the feminist movement sought women's equality on both political and personal levels.[34]

Tavaana organization's research found that the second wave was not rigidly structured or led by a single figure or group. As one feminist wrote:

> The women's movement is a non-hierarchical one." It does things collectively and experimentally. The movement was deeply divided between young and old, upper-class and lower class, conservative and radical. When these divides were combined with a reluctance to choose official leaders for the movement, it gave the media an opening to anoint its own "feminist leader," leading to resentment within the movement. Meanwhile, in the leadership vacuum, the most assertive women promoted themselves as leaders, prompting attacks from the other women who believed that all members of the movement should be equal in status. Nonetheless, women like Gloria Steinem and Germaine Greer attracted media attention through both their popular writings and their appealing image.[35]

*The Division Begins*

Due to this media image, many critical voices began to emerge regarding the invisibility of African American women in the movement, as Rosalyn Baxandall noted in her article. She writes that black feminism developed as well, notably in large urban centers, but it captured far less media attention. African American women have

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[34] "The 1960s-70s American Feminist Movement," Tavaana, accessed March 25, 2019, https://tavaana.org/en/case-studies/1960s-70-american-feminist-movement-breaking-down-barriers-women.

[35] "The 1960s-70s American Feminist Movement," Tavaana, accessed March 25, 2019, https://tavaana.org/en/case-studies/1960s-70-american-feminist-movement-breaking-down-barriers-women.

historically had a stronger tradition of honoring women's independence, often due to necessity than have white women. Surveys done in the early 1970s show that, in general, Black women were more feminist than with women in their attitudes toward specific issues such as daycare, equal pay, equal work, and equality in relationships. As Elizabeth Toledo, NOW vice-president of action and organizer of February 22, 1998, Women of Color and Allies Summit, proclaimed, "Women of color have shaped the feminist movement from its inception in this country, yet the public face of feminism is often seen as white.[36]

Rosalyn Baxandall continues by stating that:

> The majority of feminists, journalists, and scholars, Black and white, continue to view early feminism as white. Even so critical and concerned, a scholar Barbara Smith had failed to recognize any Black women's groups before 1973 when mostly middle-class and professional African American women formed the National Black Feminist Organization. The history written so far by white and Black scholars largely obliterates individuals such as Cellestine Ware, Florynce Kennedy, Patricia Robinson, Barbara Omolade, Daphne Busby, Safiya Bandele, and Frances Beals—Black activist who wrote about feminism before 1973, as well as Black women's groups such as Mother Alone Working and the Third World Women's Alliance.[37]

The article, "How Did Feminism Get to be "All White"? A Conversation Between Jane Mansbridge and Barbara Smith, raised the question, "Why do people keep making the mistakes of thinking that feminism is white"? African American has historically supported the movement in greater numbers than white women have. Barbara Smith responded that "Black feminism is very much alive among the activist I know. But its organizations are not visible in mainstream politics. It faces resistance in the African

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[36] Elizabeth Toledo, "Linking Arms in Dangerous Times Summit Urges Dialogue, Action of Race," *National NOW Times* 30 (January 1998).

[37] Rosalyn Baxandall, "Re-Visioning the Women's Liberation Movement's Narrative: Early Second Wave African American Feminists," *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 230.

American community. And white feminists are often not sensitive to black women's approaches to abortion, rape, work outside the home, and many other issues. She further writes that although most black women support feminist issues—such as equal pay—they consider feminism itself a white thing."[38]

In another article, "Struggling to Connect: White and Black Feminism in the Movement Years," Winifred Breines writes as an activist in the socialist feminist movement in Boston, she, like most other with, a former leftist, and antiwar activists who became feminists, was committed to creating an interracial feminist movement in the United States. Their failure caused her to want to explore the issue of race in the feminist movement, particularly why an interracial movement did not develop. Breines further explains that the early women's movement was accused of being racist. Commentators, including whites at the time and since, have consistently described white feminists' emphasis on gender at the expense of race and class as naïve, hurtful, and obtuse about what it means to be a woman of color in the United States. The accepted explanation for the whiteness of the feminist movement was that it was composed of women who were ignorant about racism and the problems that women of color faced. Because of their white, middle-class privilege, the account goes, most early feminists, even those who were radical, socialist, and dissenters from the status quo, created feminism in which black women—and black and white women are the primary focus here—were

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[38] Jane Mansbridge and Barbara Smith, "How Did Feminism Get to be 'All White,'" *The American Prospect* 11, no. 9 (2000): 32.

unwelcome and uncomfortable. As a result, feminism remained predominantly white for many years.[39]

The article, *"Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism,"* written by Becky Thompson, states that several histories have been published that chronicle the emergence and contributions of the Second Wave feminism. Although initially eager to read and teach from these histories, she found herself increasingly concerned about the extent to which they provide a version of Second Wave history that one writer refers to as "hegemonic feminism." This feminism is the white led, marginalizes the activism and world views of women of color, focuses mainly on the United States, and treats sexism as the ultimate oppression. Hegemonic feminism deemphasizes or ignores a class, and race analysis generally sees equality with men as the goal of feminism and has an individual rights-based, rather than a justice-based vision for social change. Thompson points out that by telling the history of the Second Wave feminism from the point of view of women of color and white antiracist women illuminates the rise of multiracial feminism—the liberation movement spearheaded by women of color in the United States in the 1970s that was characterized by its international perspective, its attention to interlocking oppressions, and its support of coalition politics.[40]

Out of necessity, African American women, as forerunners of women's rights, have a strong tradition of advocating on behalf of women's independence and

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[39] Winifred Breines, "Struggling to Connect: White and Black Feminism in the Movement Years," *American Society Association* 6, no. 1 (2007): 18.

[40] Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 337.

liberation.[41] Ironically, African American women have not perceived feminism and the feminist agenda of white female middle-class women as having anything to do with them and, therefore, have shunned white women liberation groups.[42] Except for Sojourner Truth and a few other Negro women, recognition of the existence of feminist consciousness for African American women was virtually nonexistent during the first wave of feminism at the end of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century. According to belle hooks, "Black feminist found that sisterhood for most White women did not mean surrendering allegiance to race, class, and sexual preference, to bond based on the shared political belief that a feminist revolution was necessary so that all people, especially women, could reclaim their rightful citizenship in the world."[43]

Black women were organizing just as much as white women, and their exclusion from national organizations and movements prompted black women to start their organizations. As a result of being alienated from White feminism, *Womanist*, a term Alice Walker (1983) coined, became a way that Black women could identify themselves as feminists without connecting themselves to the racism within some feminist movements.[44] Alice Walker defines womanist, is the opposite of girlish, i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious. A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, " you acting womanish," i.e. like a woman. This usually refers to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for me. Interested in grown-up

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[41] Baxandall, "Re-Visioning the Women's Liberation Movements Narrative," 230.

[42] Mansbridge and Smith, "How Did Feminism Get To Be 'All White?" 32.

[43] belle hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1991).

[44] Marbley, "African American Women's Feelings," 608.

doings. Acting grown up and being grown. First Corinthians 13:11 sums this definition up perfectly, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; I became an adult, I put away childish ways."

Womanist was the answer to the struggle that African American women and women of color face in their exclusion. It became the defining and the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face from the exclusionary practices of the feminist movement. Womanist politics sprang from the shared belief that black women are inherently valuable, that their liberation is a necessity, not an adjunct to somebody else's. Their politics evolve from a healthy love for themselves, their sisters, and their community, which allows them to continue in their struggle and work.[45]

Generation Z has similar sentiments when it comes to the community and wanting to make a difference. Generation Z wants to see a change in an unjust system and seek to solve the problems. They want to build their identities around something that will last. If the church is trying to retain this generation's trust, they must find a way to include them in meaningful conversations. If not, this generation will alienate the church by shifting their thoughts from the sacred to the secular until Christian thought is no more than a trivial relic of an intolerant past.[46]

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[45] Fatema Hayat, "What is a Womanist," The Progressive Pupil Blog, accessed March 25, 2019, https://progressivepupil.wordpress.com/2014/03/04/what-is-a-womanist.

[46] Tessa Landrum, "Gen Z is spiritually illiterate and abandoning church: How did we get here?" Kentucky Today, accessed April 5, 2020, https//kentuckytoday.com/stories/gen-z-spiritually-illiterate-and-abandoning-church-how-did-we-get-here.23397.

*Lack of Support*

Marbley reminds us that African American women were strong advocates of feminism. Once more, there remained very little awareness, support, and collaboration from black women or the black community in the women's movements. What is more, a lack of cooperation of women of color with white women in first, second and third-wave feminism can be attributed to several factors including the lack of attention given to how the multiple oppressions of race, gender, and class and the dynamics of the interplay of these oppressions with politics adversely affect their lives.[47]

Generation Z are still very much receptive to spirituality and faith. When asked what they want from the church, certain words emerged, such as authenticity, purpose, relationships, community, and serving, seems to stick out. Generation Z want to be a part of something that matters. They see through the fake stuff. They want to discover God in the context of the community and are a mission to make a difference. If the church does not find a way to be more authentic and meaningful, they will leave the church for a more authentic and purposeful experience. [48]

## Conclusion

The invisibility of the women of color's presence, participation, and contributions was overlooked and not valued by white feminists. The results of the invisibility lead to division, alienation, and lack of support from the women of color to the overall objective of the movement. This historical event informs the project by reminding society that they

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[47] Marbley, "African American Women's Feelings," 606.

[48] Top Reasons Millennials and Gen Z Hate Your Church, ACS Technologies Group, accessed April 9. 2020, https:/acstechnologies.com/sites/default/files/reasons-millenlials-hate-the-church.pdf

should never overlook a particular segment of the population due to the perceived notion in their lack of capabilities, intelligence, and leadership. One must remember that everyone has a vital role to play in the success of any organization or community. The feelings of exclusion can have a lasting impact and have profound consequences.

This historical event also informs the project because one must understand the growing need for acceptance. The women of color demands to be included and accepted in the movement are similar to the increasing desire of Generation Z to be included and socially accepted by their peers and leaders. Any organization involving this generation must find a way to be inclusive in their planning and leadership. One must establish a feeling of belonging by creating a path for leadership where their voices are heard, and their opinion matters. When allowed to play an essential role in the community, it encourages self-confidence and self-awareness, which promotes acceptance and can help them grow into young leaders of tomorrow.

Finally, one must allow this generation to exercise their leadership capabilities; if not, it may cause them to question their purpose in the church community. Leaders must give them a sense of ownership and provide adequate training and support them in carrying out their purpose of being a part of the larger fellowship within the church. In turn, this can lead them to gain the participation of their young counterparts in the congregation and the local community. For churches to be sustainable, leader must give this generation leadership opportunities, which will lead the church into the future. It is important not to suffer the same consequences the women's movement suffered when alienating the women of color from the cause and purpose of the movement.

For the next chapter, the research will explore the theological foundation by elaborating on how liberation theology gives hope to a seemingly hopeless situation and how this hope can be the key to deriving answers and finding solutions to the oppressed feelings of being overlooked. This chapter will examine the thoughts of several liberation theologians and will give hope and insight for this project.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

## Introduction

The theological foundation of the project is centered on the religious movement, liberation theology. The focus for this chapter is on how liberation theology and its implications can help inform the research project by tackling these four basic questions: What are the themes? What are the issues? What is the relevance? How will this information engage classical and modern theologians? It is believed that liberation theology is key to deriving answers and solutions that will help address the theme of overlooking youth in leadership. In liberation theology, the claim that Jesus is the liberator, the one who sets free, the one who empowers, the one who makes all things new, allows us to have faith in knowing that a sustainable society is a society that is not oppressive. Liberation theology is a theology that is inclusive and draws on the diverse talents and culture of its entire body.

For this chapter, the study will focus on liberation theology and how it is relevant to addressing the issue of overlooking youth in leadership. The study will highlight theological viewpoints on how Jesus elevated people throughout scripture because they were powerless, marginalized, and at risk. The Bible is filled with numerous examples of how Jesus liberated, transformed, and freed individuals from what prevents them from becoming all that God has intended for them to be. Jesus proclaims in Luke 4:18 that "the

Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free." When Jesus elevated the powerless in biblical times, he was lifting those who were considered the least of these.

Liberation theology stressed both heightened awareness of the "sinful" socioeconomic structures that caused social inequities and the active participation in changing these structures. Liberation theology believes that God speaks particularly through the poor and that the Bible can be understood only when seen from the perspective of the poor.[1]

Liberation theology is a form of optimism in which "hope" plays a crucial role for those dealing with difficult situations. Hope is oriented toward the liberation and freedom of the poor, the marginalized, the exploited, the oppressed, and the insignificant in our society.[2] Part of oppression is to make one feel hopeless about what happens in society. Often society is told that the inequities and oppression will always exist within the hierarchy of leadership. This is the way it is, and that certain individuals are small and meaningless, and there is nothing they can do about it. Refusing to feel bad about themselves and daring to be hopeful, challenges the picture oppression has posted on young people about what they are like, what the world is like, and what is possible for them.

Liberation Theology allows for a meaningful discussion to address the despair of this generation who are marginalized and oppressed by exclusionary practices. The term

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[1] Britannica, s.v. "Liberation Theology," accessed November 15, 2019, www.britannica.com/topic/liberation-theology.

[2] Li Zhixiong and Christopher Rowland, "Hope: The Convergence and Divergence of Marxism and Liberation Theology," *Theology Today* 70, no. 2 (2013): 181.

oppression can seem harsh when considering how this generation is overlooked within church leadership, but oppression can be subtle and not easily recognized. One of the things that oppressive communities spread on us is that "this is the way it is, and it will not change." To define oppression in this context, it is what happens when individuals or groups of people are categorized or otherwise treated unjustly, whether by individuals, organizations, or other groups. The word oppression comes from the Latin phrase "*opprimere*," which means "pressed down."

An article written by the Karcus Center for Social Justice titled "What is Oppression" states that an oppressive system is built around the ideology of the superiority of some groups and the inferiority of others. This ideology makes those designated as inferior feel confined, 'less than,' and hinders the realization of their full spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological well-being and potential. They are portrayed as "others" and are marginalized via social, mental, emotional, and physical limitations, which prevents their full inclusion in the community. All actions, systems, cultures, ideologies, and technologies which refuse to take full and equitable consideration of everyone and everything affected by them is aspects of oppression.[3] Often oppressive behavior is hard to see by those who are in a position of power in the hierarchy.

In contrast, oppression is not necessarily obvious to those who are being oppressed; nor does it necessarily involve dissatisfaction or a tendency to rebel. This is because enculturation can be subtle, systematic, and not ordinarily called into question. There are endless ways that oppression shapes not only what people do but also how they

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[3] "Karcus Center for Social Justice," Kalamazoo College, accessed November 5, 2019, https://reason.kzoo.edu/csji/assets/What_is_oppression.pdf.

think and speak. People are not always oppressed by cruel tyrants with bad intentions. A well-intentional community can place constraints on people and limit their voices within the organization. In this case, the overlooking this generation in leadership is an oppressive act that is the result of choices or policies that are embedded within the norms of the community. These norms have become a restrictive structure of forces and barriers that immobilize and reduce the young people within that community.

Oppression enables those in charge to have access to control resources and choices while making those labeled as inferior vulnerable when denied access to those resources. It is a set of processes, actions, and ideas that hinder the oppressed from exercising their full freedom of choice and have access to resources. These systems of inequity operate at internalized, institutional, and interpersonal levels to distribute advantages to some and to disadvantage others. Oppression is the tool that preserves existing unjust social relations and protects existing monopolies of power and or privilege.[4]

Although this generation is not trying to monopolize the power and privilege of the leadership, they should be allowed to discover their full humanity by changing the narrative that perpetuates a stereotype of telling them that they are undeveloped, immature, and identity-less within the community. This is where the praxis of liberation theology can help free them from the constraints and assumptions, which views them as passive recipients of oppressive culture but rather see them as empowering agents of change.

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[4] "Karcus Center for Social Justice," Kalamazoo College, accessed November 5, 2019, https://reason.kzoo.edu/csji/assets/What_is_oppression.pdf.

Liberation theology is rooted in Christian theology that emphasizes the social concerns and liberation of oppressed people. In the 1950s and the 1960s, liberation theology was the political praxis of Latin America theologians, such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff, and Juan Luis Segundo, who popularized the phrase "preferential option for the poor. The Latin American context produced evangelical advocates who called for an integral mission emphasizing evangelism and social responsibility. Therefore, it is important to examine the thoughts of several theologians and their views on liberation theology. Each theologian has similar definitions of liberation theology; however, their beliefs and ideology vary in application.

*Main Body*

Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian philosopher, theologian, and Dominican priest, was regarded as one of the founders of liberation theology. Gutierrez's book, *A Theology of Liberation,* gave the movement its name and emphasized the church's mission of those on the periphery of society. The movement gain strength because of their insistence that ministry should include involvement in the struggle of the poor against the elite. He was criticized as a naïve purveyor of Marxism and advocated social activism. In his book, Gutierrez combined populist ideas with the social teachings of the Catholic Church. His book is based on an understanding of history in which the human being is seen as assuming conscious responsibility for human destiny. Yet, Christ, the Savior, liberates the human race from sin, which is the root of all disruption of friendship and all injustice and oppression.[5]

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[5] Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Theology of Liberation*, (New York, NY: Orbis Books), xxvii.

Gutierrez popularized the phrase "preferential option for the poor," which became a slogan of liberation theology and later appeared in addresses of the Pope. Drawing from the biblical motif on the poor, Gutierrez asserts that God is revealed as having a preference for those people who are "insignificant," "marginalized," "unimportant," "needy," "despised," and "defenseless."[6] To be sure, as to not misinterpret Gutierrez's definition of the term "preferential option," he stresses, "Preference implies the universality of God's love, which excludes no one. It is only within the framework of this universality that we can understand the preference, that is, "what comes first."[7] Gutierrez explains, "liberation theology has a broad and deep aspiration that inflames humankind and liberates us from all that limits or keeps human beings from self-fulfillment, liberation from all impediments to the exercise of freedom."[8]

Kira Dault's describes a similar definition by stating that "liberation theology is a social and political movement within the church that attempts to interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ through the lived experiences of oppressed people." Liberation theology has caused some contention in the church due to its Marxist economic theory. [9] The one dispute that caused the most controversy was that liberation theology used Marxist economic theory and applied it to the gospel. In this theories interpretation, Jesus becomes the "liberator" and always is firmly on the side of the poorest of the poor. Liberation theology calls for the poor to be cared for and brought into the fullness of

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[6] Gutierrez, *The Theology of Liberation*, xxvi.

[7] Gutierrez, *The Theology of Liberation,* xxvi.

[8] Gutierrez, *The Theology of Liberation*, xxvi.

[9] Kira Dault, "What is Liberation Theology?" *U.S. Catholic* 79, no. 10 (2014): 46.

human flourishing by the reorganization of social, governmental, and economic structures.[10]

Gutierrez and Dault's thoughts of God's preference for the poor can help liberate this young generation in knowing that God has a preference for those who are marginalizing and excluded. It frees them from the bondage of people's low expectations. Reminding them that God is calling them into a life of service and that service frees them for the life God has in store for them. This allows them to be brought into the fullness of their humanity.

Robert Brown takes a different approach and writes that the central message of liberation theology is the good news of liberation. The context of the good news of liberation is, threefold and the three emphases cannot be separated, and if one tries to do so, they miss the point and falsify. Each emphasis focus must include the other two with no exceptions.[11] He describes each emphasis succinctly:

> The emphasis in liberation theology is liberation from unjust social structures that destroy people. The structure may be political or economic or cultural; they may grow out of warped attitudes based on race, class, age, nation, or sex; they may also be embodied in ecclesiastical structures as well. The liberation message on this first level is the invitation to work for change, for reform, or, if necessary, for the destruction of social structures that are sinful rather than good. The second emphasis in liberation theology is liberation from the power of fate, from the sense that one's station in life is foreordained, and that it would be presumptuous and arrogant even to try. The liberation message on this second level is that things need not remain the way they are, for the biblical God is working actively for justice and seeks to enlist all of God's people in the struggle. The operative word is hope third emphasis is liberation theology is liberation from personal sin and guilt. The liberation message on this level is the reality of gratuitousness of

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[10] Dault, "What is Liberation Theology?" 46.

[11] Robert McAfee Brown, *Liberation Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 61-62.

> grace—the assurance that the resources of divine mercy and forgiveness are always at hand, gifts ready to be bestowed on all who ask for them.[12]

When you compare all three emphases to overlooking this generation in leadership, this generation have been unjustly stereotyped to be lazy, selfish, hyper, addicted to technology, inappropriate, insecure, overconfident, loud and inconsiderate. Yet, these descriptions can describe people in all age categories. Myers writes that when one comes to believe in a caricature of this generation, this misunderstanding can cause damage to them and limit them with low expectations, which in turn holds them in bondage. Although the life-stage of this generation might be a real thing with its own set of unique biological and social changes, it is a myth. Myers continues by stating that society feeds into this myth when they assume the changes primarily define those in this stage of life experience rather than allowing them to identify who they are as children of God. Society inadvertently created this caricature of the adolescent through the convergence of unproven scientific theories, social shifts, and economic fluctuations.[13] The good news is that God liberates this generation from those unjust caricatures by letting them know that they are God's children with indispensable gifts for God's world.

Paulo Freire writes that liberation from any oppression is not a given; it must be pursued. In his book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* the oppressed will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it. The fight, because of the purpose given it, will consist of a deconstructed assumption that this generation is incapable of leading because they lack maturity, knowledge, and accountability. Without denying that changes do occur during

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[12] Brown, "*Liberation Theology,*" 62-63.

[13] Jeremy Paul Myers, *Liberating Youth Form Adolescence* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press 2018), 12.

the teen years, they must fight to become an active part of the conversations, to deconstruct those assumptions, and this may force leadership to see young people as fully human, right now. The genesis of this stereotype is society's desire to control, understand, and predict everything. If one wishes to proclaim good news to young people, then they must do the hard work of hearing and understanding who they are and how they can fulfill their role in God's kingdom here on earth. Freire says that this fight will consist of love opposing the lovelessness, which lies in the heart of the oppressors, even when clothed in false generosity.[14]

Real generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish the myth. Freire states that fake charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working to transform the world. As individuals or as peoples, by fighting for the restoration of humanity, they will be attempting the restoration of true generosity.[15]

Real generosity is instinctive to genuine relationships. Greer reminds us that because of God's spiritual, justifying actions in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, Christians are called to spiritual works of justice and love on this earth, as well.[16] Therefore, salvation and liberation are two parts of the same process, and it should be at the forefront of Christian work regarding young people. To understand and experience

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[14] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 45.

[15] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 45.

[16] Greer, "Truth Be Told," 24.

Christ's salvation, this generation needs liberation to be physical, a here and now a reality, as well as a future spiritual reality. This generation needs leadership to support them in their efforts to be contributors within the community. The one who liberates and supports them in their efforts, ministers the reality of Christ to them. In this way, the leadership can understand and appropriate the deeper and equally real spiritual liberation that is theirs in Jesus.[17]

Black liberation theologian, James Cone contrasts these thoughts by stating, "The language of liberation must reflect the experiences of the people about whom we claim to speak. To say that one's speech is a theology of liberation does not in itself mean that it represents the oppressed. There are many theologies of liberation, not all of which represent the weak and the helpless. The difference between liberation theology in general and liberation theology in the Christian perspective is found in whether the language about freedom is derived from one's participation in the oppressed people's struggle. If one's language about freedom is derived from one's involvement in an oppressed people's struggle for freedom, then it is a Christian language. It is a language that is accountable to the God encountered in the oppressed community, and not some abstract God in a theological textbook. The true liberation theologian is compelled to hear the cries and the moans of the people who sing, "I wish I knew how it would feel to be free. I wish I could break all the chains holdin' me." [18]

James Cone continues by stating that it is unfortunate that many contemporary black churches have strayed from their liberating heritage. He surmises that "instead of

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[17] Greer, "Truth Be Told," 26.

[18] James Cone, *Speaking the Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 11.

deepening their commitment to the "least of these" in their community, many have adopted the same attitude toward the poor as the white churches are more concerned about buying and building new church structures than they are about feeding, clothing, and housing the poor. Cones continues by stating that too many pastors are more concerned about how to manipulate people for an increase in salary than they are about liberating the oppressed from socio-political bondage. They would rather hold this generation back instead of raising them, ever so slightly keeping them at a lower level and keeping them in bondage by downplaying all their skills and abilities. If black churches do not repent by reclaiming their liberating heritage in empowering young people today, their Christian identity will be no more authentic than that of the white churches that segregated them."[19]

Dwight Hopkins believes that to claim a liberation heritage that empowers the least in society, there is a rhythm of connectivity and genuine purpose. In his book, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* he writes:

> The rhythm of black theology starts from faith in, commitment to, worship with, and work for the poor in the community. This is the first part of the rhythm. Because the spirit of comfort, hope, and liberation exists among the least in society even before the theologian works with them, the theologian has to be connected to this dynamic between the poor and the liberation spirituality. The relationship with the poor and their concerns, theology follows the second step within the rhythm of black theology. Theology is self-critical thinking about the practice and faith of the liberation of grassroots people within the church and the non-church. The third dimension of black theology's methodological rhythm is the return of theology to the practice of faith to further the pastoral, ethical, political, cultural, economic, linguistic, and everyday way of life of the poor trying "to make a way out of no way" with their liberator God."[20]

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[19] Cone, *Speaking the Truth*, 122.

[20] Dwight N. Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 47.

To expand on Hopkins's rhythm of connectivity and genuine purpose, this generation want their liberation heritage to be authentic and relational. If not, they will turn their backs on the one thing that can offer them more authenticity, meaning, and purpose—the church.

To expand on God's love for the least in society, theologian Jeremy Paul Myers explains in greater detail why it is necessary to liberate this generation. In the introduction to his book, *Liberating Youth from Adolescence*, he begins with the poem written by Maya Angelo, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

> The cage bird sings with a fearful trill
> of things unknown but longed for still
>
> and his tune is heard on a distant hill
> for the caged bird sings of freedom.[21]

Myers writes, "Jesus knows this generation are caged birds, like the ones in Maya Angelou's poem. To liberate them, we need to change the way we think about our young people so that we might love them as they are, not as we think they should be. If we open our eyes, ears, and heart to young people in new ways, then we might recognize this song of the caged bird."[22]

The field of critical youth studies has also offered an important corrective to the materialistic ways of understanding young people by lifting the ideals of youth voice and agency. Critical youth studies refuse to see young people as passive recipients of oppressive culture but instead sees them as empowered agents of change. The most

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[21] Maya Angelou, *The Complete Poetry* (New York, NY: Random House, 2015).

[22] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 2.

potent strand woven into this counter script is the theological concept of vocation or God's call to serve one's neighbor in freedom.[23]

The youth become frustrated with adult's low expectations of them. They have good ideas, experiences, wisdom, and skills the church could use. They have gifts the entire community, schools, neighborhoods, and local businesses can benefit from. The leaders in the church community rarely ask them to contribute. Ephesian's 2:8-10 states, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is a gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be a way of life". Society can prevent young people from seeing their full potential if they continue to deny them the opportunities to contribute through the works that God has prepared.

Liberation theology and the biblical narrative offer an alternative. Myers emphasizes that:

> There is no such thing as the undeveloped youth in God's story. It is best to understand youth as those who are not undeveloped but called by God, not identity-less but named children of God, not self-centered but relational, not consumers but co-creators with God in our world. God is calling them into this life. The framework of the called co-creator will liberate youth from the dangerous myth of the undeveloped consumer.[24]

When we come to believe that young people are not ready to lead, we make it difficult to imagine God working through them. The theological framework of the co-creator believes God is calling each person to join in God's work at this very moment. God is not waiting until their brains, bodies, or social capacities are fully formed. God called

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[23] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 5.

[24] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 38.

everyone into service. Therefore, the bold claim is made that everyone has a call or vocation from God to serve. To be called means, one is set free to partner with God in the healing of the world for the sake of the world, not to earn God's favor. The youth have this call now; it is not something they have to wait for adulthood to live. Reminding youth that God is calling them into a life of service liberates them for the life God has in store for them.[25]

Myers continues to deconstruct the thoughts on young people who are called by God by expounding on the story of Samuel's call. He writes, "Most biblical scholars believed that Samuel was probably twelve years old when his mother brought him to Eli to be trained as a priest." It's safe to assume he was developmentally ready to begin training because his mother nor Eli assumed he was ready to be a prophet, at least not until the call came from God—from outside Samuel. Myers maintained that "Samuel's call did not well up inside him. It came from beyond. Young people are not just called; they are called by God. They do not make up or imagine their call; God gives these calls. Samuel knew there was a caller. He mistakenly assumed it was Eli. Yet, he still knew this external call was coming from someone. Samuel knew his call was originating from someone he should seek."[26]

Myers emphasizes:

> Samuels' inability to see that it was God calling him did not prevent God from calling him. God calls each youth to participate in God's work right now. God would not call them to this work if God were not able to equip them. They are ready now. They will be ready to answer the call in a new way tomorrow and each day after. God's call is rarely an obvious or predetermined pathway. God's call is an invitation to follow, but it is not a blueprint, plan, or map of the pathway

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[25] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 69.

[26] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 38.

> the journey will take. God's call is not about progress but rather about relationships, trust, and putting one foot forward (or backward) at a time as we struggle to live the life of discipleship.[27]

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, say the Lord, the plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (Jer. 29:11). We cite these words from Jeremiah's letter to the Israelites to reassure someone that God has their best interest in mind. But what God is offering is hardly a plan. Rather, it is a set of promises and an invitation. There is no pre-marked path or prediction, only a promise. The "you" in this verse is also plural, not singular. God extends these promises and invitations to us collectively, not to us as individuals.[28]

Myers continues by suggesting "that in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, they were told to recognize the variety of gifts within their community. He warns them to know God's spirit has given them a variety of gifts that are very different from one another, but all these gifts matter to the well-being of the body of Christ. Each gift is unique, but each gift is the same in that each gift is for the common good (1Cor 12:70). Young peoples' calls and gifts are not for their betterment or development. They are a call for the common good."[29] God's call to a life lived for the common good is constant drumming on the souls of this generation. It might be more intense and more noticeable at certain times or in certain places. As this generation learn to notice it, they begin to encounter it regularly.

Myers acknowledges the:

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[27] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 74.

[28] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 75.

[29] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 75.

> Development for the undeveloped happens in fits and starts, with an individual sometimes lagging behind her peers for months. God's call is constant. There are times when this constant drumming of God's call on our souls manifests itself in a specific way. The call, in general, is to partner with God in bringing about life and reconciliation. This general call will, at times, require specific action. Just as there is not a specific pathway or plan with the call, there is not always a specific action required either. Following Christ, into the world to love and serve can sometimes be ambiguous. Because the call is ambiguous and not specific, it will always require discernment. Discerning the call is a process of sifting through a young person's options while considering the context, needs, assets, and opportunities. The call is rarely clear. It is wise to be wary of those who seem to be too clear about their call.[30]

Regarding this project, Myers points out that this generation are led to believe that, cannot contribute in a meaningful way until they reach adulthood and develop maturity and expertise needed to be a contributing member of society. If we believe this concept, we are saying they are not fully human. We believe that God calls and equips them as members of the body of Christ. Therefore, we can no longer perpetuate the lie that this generation are not ready to lead. They are called, in-process, and they are not the people they will be tomorrow or next year. Myers concludes, "God calls them into an unfolding life of discovering their gifts and discerning how God is inviting them to participate with God in God's work. We know in our hearts that young people are called and not undeveloped."[31] Now it is time to allow that belief to reshape our ministries with them.

## Conclusion

All the thoughts and ideas of these liberation theologians provide insight and optimism for oppressed individuals who are excluded from society. Liberation theology

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[30] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 79.

[31] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 79.

plays a part in breaking silences and making new stories. A free person tells his or her own story. A valued person lives in a society in which her or his story has a place. To reiterate James Cone, liberation theology is a language about freedom, and that freedom is derived from one's participation in the struggle of those who are oppressed. If one's language about freedom is derived from one's involvement in an oppressed people's struggle for freedom, then it is a Christian language. Applying this Christian language makes one accountable to God encountered in the oppressed community.[32]

Liberation theology is key to deriving answers and solutions to address the overlooking of this generation in leadership. The youth in my context has not been able to exercise their freedom to lead. They are disenfranchised and underrepresented in leadership. This disenfranchisement and underrepresentation have denied and silenced their voices. They have not been able to give voice to their thoughts, concerns, convictions, or beliefs responding to their status. Having a voice is crucial. Sometimes just being able to speak, to be heard, to be believed, are crucial parts of membership in a family, a community, and a society. By redefining whose voice is valued, one can redefine society and its values.[33] If this generation are to perceive the church as "the place to be," one must acknowledge their struggles and assist them in becoming an intricate part of the community.

The next chapter will explore the area of Social Psychology for Interdisciplinary foundation for this project. The chapter will focus on the thoughts and behaviors of

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[32] Cone, *Speaking the Truth*, 11.

[33] Rebecca Solnit, "Breaking Silence Our Mightiest Weapon Against Oppression," Brain Pickings, accessed March 25, 2019, https://www.brainpickings.org/2017/3/20/rebecca-solnit-mother-of-all-questions-silence.

individuals who are socially excluded and how these behaviors can cause psychological damage to those who are overlooked.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

## Introduction

The interdisciplinary foundation will explore the field of Social Psychology to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings. Social Psychology is all about understanding how each person's behavior is influenced by the social environment in which that behavior takes place. Social Psychology looks at a wide range of topics such as: group behavior, social perception, leadership, nonverbal behavior, conformity, aggression, and prejudice.

The desire for positive social bonds is considered as one of the most basic and universal needs of an individual. Failure to satisfy this need can have various consequences for an individual's development and wellbeing. Considered the most important social relationships, social exclusion has significant outcomes for people's psychological and physiological functioning. Social exclusion, which involves being ignored and rejected from a social group, is based on the perception that a person is not accepted, respected, and supported by others. Socially excluded youth are not considered as a part of a social group or environment and feels as loose, rootless, and foreign. Research has indicated that social exclusion was associated with various emotional and

behavioral difficulties such as loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, and aggressive behavior, and thereby, may influence youths' life satisfaction.[1]

Kendra Cherry imparts that it is important to note that Social Psychology is not just about looking at social influences, social perception, and social interaction are also vital to understanding social behavior. The way that we see other people and the way we think they see us can play an influential role in a wide variety of actions and decisions.[2]

The rationale behind the choice of Social Psychology is how it interacts with the theme of overlooking youth in leadership. Social psychologist knows that exclusion and rejection are such powerful fears that people will do all sorts of things to avoid. Understanding how people relate to each other, why they choose to exclude and ignore others, and what determines their response to rejection and exclusion has never been of greater importance than today. Recent research has linked being excluded to aversive psychological effects, as well as aversive behavioral outcomes. Yet, despite the far-reaching implications of social exclusion on both social outcast and on society as a whole, it was only in the last decade that social psychology began to regard social exclusion as an area worthy of investigation rather than merely and outcome to be avoided.

Arguably, human beings are among the most socially dependent creatures. Evolutionary success owes much to the ability to cooperate and collaborate. It seems reasonable to argue that the need to interact with others and the ability to form and

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[1] Gokmen Arslan, "Mediating Role of the Self-Esteem and Resilience in the Association Between Social Exclusion and Life Satisfaction Among Adolescents," *Personality and Individual Differences* 151 (2019).

[2] Kendra Cherry, "An Overview of Social Psychology," Very Well Mind, accessed November 5, 2019, https:/www.verywellmind.com/social-psychology.

maintain complex and rewarding social relationships are among the most fundamental human needs. Throughout most of evolutionary history, one lived, loved, and labored within the confines of small, intimate groups where they knew, and were known by, each member. Within these groups, people were sheltered from the elements, protected from predators, and ultimately allowed to propagate and prosper. To be rejected and excluded from the group is like a death sentence.

The feelings that stem from being excluded challenges a person's fundamental need to belong. The need to belong is one of the most consistent human motivations behind basic survival needs, such as shelter and nourishment. Many people, at some point in their lives, had the experience of feeling excluded or being rejected by significant others. Almost without exception, the consequences of social exclusion for targeted individuals and groups are negative. Being excluded also makes people more anxious and reduces their life satisfaction, sense of meaningful existence, and hope. [3]

Hutchinson writes, "Being excluded can evoke antisocial and aggressive responses, most likely because of the threat it poses to people's need for control. Other responses are more passive and include withdrawal or self-harm, whereas more constructive responses include trying harder to engage with the majority or conforming more strongly to relevant norms."[4] He suggests the strategies that promote intergroup contact, and a shared sense of identity might go some way towards fostering inclusionary responses by both the excluder and the excluded, respectively."[5]

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[3] Paul Hutchinson, Dominic Abrams, and Julie Christian, *The Social Psychology of Exclusion: Multidisciplinary Handbook of Social Exclusion Research* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2007), 31.

[4] Hutchinson, Abrams, and Christian, *The Social Psychology of Exclusion*, 30.

[5] Hutchinson, Abrams, and Christian, *The Social Psychology of Exclusion,* 30.

There are many psychological theories and models relative to social exclusion. For this chapter, Kipling D. Williams's Need-Threat Model will be used because it is a widely used model that focuses on social exclusion. The Need-Threat Model will be examined because it addresses the theme of social exclusion in the biblical, historical, and theological foundations portions of this project, and identify a Scientific Model that will engage this theory.

*Need Threat Model Theory*

According to Williams's Need-Threat Model, social exclusion impacts four fundamental needs of the target; self-esteem, meaningful existence, belongingness, and control. While self-esteem and belongingness are likely to overlap to some degree because self-esteem involves feelings of belongingness, self-esteem is also derived from other aspects of the self that are distinct from belongingness, such as competence. [6]

Williams created a scientific theory called The Need-Threat-Model for ostracism. This model posits three stages:

> Need-Threat Model posits three stages: immediate (or reflexive), coping (reflective), and long-term (resignation). During the immediate stage, ostracism is felt as pain and as a threat to the four fundamental needs: belonging, self-esteem, are needs associated with maintaining and developing social connections; control and meaningful existence can be achieved without regard to social connections. Ostracism (exclusion) also increases anger and sadness. Contextual factors and individual differences have little impact on the target's immediate experience of pain and distress.[7]

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[6] Gili Freedman, Kipling D. Williams, and Jennifer S. Beer, "Softening the Blow of Social Exclusion: The Responsive Theory of Social Exclusion," *Journal of Frontiers in Psychology, Hypothesis and Theory* 5 (2016): 2.

[7] Kipling D. Williams and Steve A. Nida, "Ostracism: Consequences and Coping," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 20, no. 2 (2011): 71-75.

Williams explains, "During the coping stage, ostracized (excluded) individuals reflect on the meaning and relevance of the ostracism experience and if it merits attention, will think and act in ways that fortify the threatened need(s). During this stage, contextual factors and individual differences do play an important role and can amplify or minimize the reaction and desire to cope. If exposure to ostracism continues over a long period, then the individual's resources for coping are depleted; and he or she is likely to experience alienation, depression, helplessness, and unworthiness."[8]

Following the exclusion episode, according to Williams, the target of ostracism is motivated to restore their needs. Targets are motivated to restore those needs, and a restoration of these needs is an important avenue for reducing the negative effects of social exclusion. When targets restore one or more of these needs, they experience reduced hurt feelings and engage in less retaliatory aggression." [9] The Need-Threat Model will be applied to the biblical, historical, and theological foundations discussed throughout this project to get a better understanding of the concept.

*Biblical*

According to Williams's Need-Threat Model, exclusion undermines people's sense that other people see them and acknowledge their existence. When people are excluded, they can feel as though sources do not consider them to be worthy of even basic acknowledgment. Williams states that "excluded people experience threats to their

[8] Williams and Nida, "Ostracism," 71-75.

[9] Freedman, Williams, and Beer, "Softening the Blow of Social Exclusion."

sense of meaningful existence whether the interaction occurs in a person, virtually, by an inanimate object, by in-group members, or by a hated group."[10]

This type of exclusion is observed from David's father, Jesse, and his brothers in 1 Samuel 16: 1-13. David is in his adolescence years, is about to transition from childhood to adulthood by being anointed the next king of Israel. David's existence up to this point is that he is the least of his brothers, an outcasted shepherd boy. Samuel, the prophet, was sent to Jesse's house to anoint the next king. Samuel and Jesse assumed that the eldest son would be anointed; however, God had a different plan. Jesse's unprompted calling and parading his seven sons before Samuel excluded the eighth and youngest son from the sacrifice. Jesse excludes David from the sacrifice and shows no inclination towards inviting him until Samuel forces him. Jesse's actions diminish David's meaningful existence within his family. Is he not worthy of at least an acknowledgment? Even though he is the least and the youngest, is it necessary to exclude him from the family gathering? By excluding him, signals that Jesse thinks David is not worthy of basic acknowledgment; after all, he is the least amongst his brothers, an outcasted shepherd boy. The possibility of David as the next king would seem impossible. The denouncement of the revelation that David was not amongst those called mixed with the possibility that Jesse still thinks David's place is with the sheep, not with the prophet, dramatically demonstrates how Jesse, and probably his first seven sons, do not think that David belongs at the sacrifice. All this unfolding drama of rejection, and revelation that "the least" has not been called and is not present, functions to demonstrate the surprise and wonder that God has seen the one who is overlooked instead of any of the rest. However, Samuel restores the threat to David's need to belong with his insistence of

[10] Freedman, Williams, and Beer, "Softening the Blow of Social Exclusion."

David being included in the ceremony. God has restored David's meaningful existence and self-esteem amongst his family and the elders of Bethlehem by anointing him as the next king of Israel and showing them that even an isolated, outcast shepherd boy has a place in his kingdom.

*Historical*

According to Williams's Need-Threat Model, in addition to self-esteem, meaningful existence, and belongingness, targets of social exclusion want to restore their sense of control. Social exclusion may undermine the targets' sense of agency over the situation. Williams' Need-Threat Model of ostracism (exclusion) contends that ignoring the target takes away the target's ability to respond and, therefore, the target's sense of control.

Targets often attempt to restore control by performing fewer prosocial acts and behave more aggressively. [11] We see this type of restorative behavior in young people all the time when they are excluded from different organizations. They tend to lessen their involvement and cooperation in the organization that excludes them and seek out organizations that are more inclusive. When this generation is included in the conversations they feel connected to the organization and have a sense of purpose. History has shown that when this generation is connected and their voices heard, they become a catalyst for change. When young people are taken seriously, they thrive. When they are not, they withdraw and become disengaged.

This disengagement can have a severe impact on the church. Leaders must unleash this generation so that they can help build the church. Members cannot afford to

[11] Freedman, Williams, and Beer, "Softening the Blow of Social Exclusion," 4.

lose the church of tomorrow because they are not taking them seriously today — most young people who have put their faith in Jesus experience the Holy Spirit and have spiritual gifts. The church must recognize this and know that the young people are looking for a cause that matters and a community that cares.

Williams's Need-Threat model can also be applied to the threat posed by the women's movement when they chose to exclude the women of color within their organization due to their limited capabilities, intelligence, and leadership. The marginalization threatened the women of color's sense of meaningful existence, belonging, and control. To gain back their control, the results of the exclusion led to division, alienation, and lack of support from the women of color to the overall objective of the movement. This was the antisocial and aggressive response to their exclusion.[12]

Freedman explains that if the targets of social exclusion are given a chance to regain control in another domain, they no longer exhibit aggression toward those who targeted them. Targets are unlikely to behave aggressively to restore threatened needs if they feel that belongingness is still possible. It is only when belongingness is out of reach that targets will behave in antisocial ways to restore their needs. Research indicates that social exclusion threatens the target's sense of control, and targets will go to lengths to restore.[13] The belongingness for the women of color was out of reach, and therefore, for them to restore their control, they formed their movement.

The Womanist Movement was the answer to the struggle that African American women and women of color face in their exclusion. It became the defining and the logical

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[12] Freedman, Williams, and Beer, "Softening the Blow of Social Exclusion," 4.

[13] Freedman, Williams, and Beer, "Softening the Blow of Social Exclusion," 4.

move to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face from the exclusionary practices of the feminist movement. Womanist politics sprang from the shared belief that black women are inherently valuable, that their liberation is a necessity, not an adjunct to somebody else's. Their restoration evolves from a healthy love for themselves, their sisters, and their community, which allows them to continue to their struggle and work.[14]

*Theological*

According to Williams, although exclusion can affect all four needs, it is likely that as long as re-inclusion is perceived to be possible, belonging and self-esteem needs will direct the individual to strive for re-inclusion. The prospect that one can regain inclusion with someone allows the individual a sense of control over his or her future. Fortifying belonging and self-esteem needs can be achieved by becoming more attentive to social information and engaging in behaviors that encourage favorable responses from other people.

Inclusiveness is always possible with Jesus. Jesus included and elevated people throughout scripture because they were powerless, marginalized, and at risk. The Bible is filled with numerous examples of how Jesus liberated, transformed, and freed individuals from what prevents them from becoming all that God has intended for them to be. Jesus proclaims in Luke 4:18 that "the Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free." When Jesus elevated the

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[14] "What Is a Womanist?" Progressive Pupil, accessed January 15, 2019, https://progressivepupil.wordpress.com/2014/03/04/what-is-a-womanist.

powerless in biblical times, he was including those who were considered the least of these and left out.

Need-Threat Model goes hand in hand with Liberation Theology by restoring the need for self-worth and meaningful existence that exclusion diminishes. Liberation theology is a form of optimism in which "hope" plays a crucial role for those dealing with difficult situations. Hope leans toward the liberation and freedom of those who are excluded. Refusing to feel bad about themselves and daring to be hopeful, challenges the picture exclusion post on young people about what they are like, what the world is like, and what is possible for them.

According to Williams Need-Threat Model, inclusion is a possibility. Cognitive and behavioral responses to ostracism vary in dramatic ways, and this variability can be traced to the needs that are most threatened. Ostracized individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors that increase their future inclusion by new individuals or groups. It seems that trying to restore one's place in the group is the more likely the type of reaction to being excluded, while aggressive and antisocial strategies for countering ostracism may be more of a last resort course of action that becomes viable when individuals conclude they have no voice.

We do not want to see young people leaving churches as a countermeasure to their frustration with adult's low expectations of them. They have good ideas, experiences, wisdom, and skills the church could use, and their voices should be heard. They have gifts the entire community—schools, neighborhoods, local businesses, and so on—can benefit from. The adults in church and community rarely ask them to contribute. If adults continue to deny the youth the opportunity to contribute through the good works

that God had prepared beforehand to be their way of life, they will prevent them from seeing their full potential.

Liberation theology and the biblical narrative offer an alternative to the threat of exclusion. There is no such thing as the undeveloped youth in God's story. It is best to understand young people as called by God, named as children of God, not self-centered but relational, with God in our world. God is calling them into this life and the call liberates them from the dangerous threat of the being undeveloped.[15]

The thought of being undeveloped is a threat that leads one to believe young people have not yet fully arrived or are not yet fully human. This belief makes it difficult for us to imagine God calling this generation and working through them. This theological framework believes God is calling each person to join in God's work at this very moment. God is not waiting until their brains, bodies, or social capacities are fully formed. God called everyone into service today, therefore, one can make the bold claim that everyone has a call or vocation from God to serve. To be called means set free to partner with God in the healing of the world for the sake of the world, not to earn God's favor. Reminding them that God is calling them into a life of service liberates them for the life God has in store for them.[16]

*Integration-Scientific Model*

The Scientific Model of Integration will be used in conjunction with the Need-Threat Model to engage biblical, historical, and theological foundations. Science can be a vital bridge to connecting with religious experience and belief. By bridging the Need-

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[15] Myers, "*Liberating Youth*, 38.

[16] Myers, *Liberating Youth*, 69.

Threat Model of science with the spiritual beliefs of each foundation, we can bring belief and practice to a broader community and be more objective while understanding that there is some subjectivity as well.

Ian Barbour, a theologian and a physicist are credited with bringing a greater appreciation to science and religion by providing a framework for modeling the interaction between the two seemingly disparate fields. He introduces us to four models for the interaction of science and religion. The four models are conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration.

In the previous discussion, the Need-Threat Model examined how exclusion threatens four fundamental needs: self-esteem, meaningful existence, belongingness, and control. Religious institutions can pose the same threats because religion and religious institutions can be one of the most exclusive communities. For religious institutions to lessen the threat posed by their teachings, they must move beyond their rigid beliefs and become more open to new thoughts and ideas.

Margaret Johnston does a great job in her article, "From Religions of Exclusion toward a Spirituality of Inclusion" in bridging the fundamental needs in the Need-Threat Model of exclusion to the inclusiveness of humanity. In her article, she writes:

> Religion teaches specific beliefs that differ greatly from one religion to another. It leads to each religion insisting its teachings are more right than all others. It gives the adherents a sense of superiority and makes them feel they must convert others to that religion. This causes a sense of competition and discord between religions. Each religion excludes outsiders and denies their beliefs have any validity. But the spiritual development stages tell us we need to move beyond these literal beliefs to become spiritually mature.[17]

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[17] Margaret Placentra Johnston, "From Religions of Exclusion Toward a Spirituality of Inclusion," *Huffington Post*, accessed February 12, 2020, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/margaret-plancentra-johnston/from-religions-of-exclusion-toward-a-spirituality-of-inclusion_b_258655.html.

Johnston states:

> This process includes a step where a person thinks through what he or she has been taught in an open-ended critical manner. This may lead a person to reason themselves out of belief in that religion, or at least it will lead to grasping the same teachings in a less rigid, and hopefully less literal, way. Following that process to its end, one can see that once they maximally loosen the religions interpretations, most religions have been formed on common "goodness" values on which people from all cultures would agree. The various religions therefore are but localized and literalized interpretations of these values.[18]

Johnston suggests that:

> Once a person accepts this, they no longer need to exclude those who don't share the same beliefs. They can begin to include more people into the same common humanity. They are no longer primarily a Christian, a Muslim, or a Jew, but a member of a much larger group, all humans, or in the fullest expressions—all of creation. In this way, they begin to approach a form of spirituality that imposes a sense of personal responsibility toward all beings. Unlike the specific religions, which exclude outsiders, this form of spirituality includes everyone.[19]

She concludes by stating that inclusiveness is a "path that can be followed from within a religion, or from outside of it, by the spiritual but not religious, and even by those who deny both religion and spirituality. The greater truth, and greater maturity, is found beyond the religions that exclude and found within forms of spirituality, religion or even nonbelief that find their basis in inclusiveness."[20]

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[18] Johnston, "From Religions of Exclusion Toward a Spirituality of Inclusion," *Huffington Post*, accessed February 12, 2020, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/margaret-plancentra-johnston/from-religions-of-exclusion-toward-a-spirituality-of-inclusion_b_258655.html.

[19] Johnston, "From Religions of Exclusion Toward a Spirituality of Inclusion," *Huffington Post*, accessed February 12, 2020, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/margaret-plancentra-johnston/from-religions-of-exclusion-toward-a-spirituality-of-inclusion_b_258655.html.

[20] Johnston, "From Religions of Exclusion Toward a Spirituality of Inclusion," *Huffington Post*, accessed February 12, 2020, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/margaret-plancentra-johnston/from-religions-of-exclusion-toward-a-spirituality-of-inclusion_b_258655.html.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Social Psychology informs the project by allowing one to understand that when people are excluded from desired social relationships, the psychological effects can be harmful to the individual's self-esteem, meaningful existence, belongingness, and control. Behavioral reactions to the exclusion can cause antisocial, aggressive, or passive and self-defeating responses. Furthermore, when one evaluates the actual experiences that people have when excluded, it opens up potential avenues for strategic intervention aimed at inclusion.

# CHAPTER SIX

# PROJECT ANALYSIS

## Introduction

The project, *"Generation Z: A Seat at the Table,"* is the result of an examination of my spiritual journey and contextual analysis, which concluded that there is a lack of youth leadership within the church. The project began with a hypothesis that the absence of youth leadership weakens the God-given talents, gifts, and diverse abilities they possess. When this generation are allowed to lead, they become empowered, inspired, and motivated to move beyond themselves and act justly, with fairness and objectivity. When looking into the consideration of how I was overlooked as a child and how my needs and concerns were not taken into consideration, I began to see a parallel pattern as to how this generation have no voice concerning issues within the church. It is a clear expectation of this project that when youth are trained and mentored to take on leadership roles, they will become active participants in various ministries.

An expressed goal of this project is to help our young people become more active in ministry within the church and to have a voice in the decision-making process. A second goal is to have them mentored in various ministries so that their gifts and talents are used to edify the ministry as well as challenge others to become more actively involved in the church. The third expressed goal is the training and development will

Impart Christian leadership qualities that will lead to the continuity of leadership within the church and beyond.

To support the project, there was extensive research conducted from biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary perspectives, integrating them to use as foundational research for the project. Synthesizing those perspectives with the project's goals will further prove the validity of the project.

Beginning with the biblical perspective, "Generation Z: A Seat at the Table" is shaped by an effort not to overlook our young people who are called by God to lead. First Samuel 16:1-13 helps to substantiate the argument that the choice of the young David showed God looking toward Israel's future, providing a leader with a heart for Him, and demonstrating how that leadership can be found in the person who is presumed to be the smallest, weakest, and therefore, most overlooked.

The overlooking of David as the next king of Israel serves to remind us that we should not overlook the young when it comes to identifying future leaders. The young David was overlooked as Israel's next king through the eyes of the prophet Samuel, David's father, Jesse, and the elders in the village. They overlooked the fact that David, the eighth son and a shepherd boy, who spent a considerable amount of time in one place, doing a good job, being faithful, and working diligently, could potentially become the next king of Israel. The pastures were David's training ground and helped him to develop a certain skill set that is required for kingship. David spent a lot of time shepherding, protecting, defending, gathering, and caring for his father's sheep. These are all skills required of a king, but his skill sets were overlooked. The isolated pastures were David's training ground, and those same isolated pastures are where David spent a lot of time

with God and developed a heart for Him. Nonetheless, David's gifts and talents were overlooked.

Just as Jesse overlooked David's skills, our church leaders tend to overlook the skills and abilities of our youth. Our young people spend a lot of time at church learning about God's word, singing in the choirs, ushering, and working in various ministries within the church. Besides, their mindsets are different than the previous generation. They are more emphatic, individualistic, digitally savvy, and entrepreneurial-minded. All of these experiences have been their training ground, and out of those experiences, they have developed some untapped skills and abilities. The church is a place where we can mold and develop their God-given skills. Many of their abilities and skills, if enhanced, can help them to become future leaders within the church as well as the community. God anointed David to be the next king of Israel, but David had some testing and refining to be done before he would be king. Our young people will need some testing and refining before they can lead, and leaders should not overlook them because of their lack of knowledge, commitment, and maturity. It would be a mistake to overlook their perspective because it can bring about a new dynamic that lends itself to new thoughts and ideas. This new dynamic can help propel ministry leadership into the future by allowing every voice a seat at the table when it comes to the future vision of the church.

As history has shown that when young people are connected, and their voices heard, they become a catalyst for change. The Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War Protest, Tiananmen Square, Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and the Parkland shootings were all successful movements throughout history that had young people at the forefront, leading the charge. Even biblically, God has used the young to change the Old Testament

world. God used David, Esther, Josiah, and Jeremiah to lead battles, save nations, and to preach his truth.

When this generation are allowed to speak their truth and are taken seriously, the church thrives. When they are not, the church will eventually die. We must unleash them so that they can help build the church. We cannot afford to lose our church of tomorrow because we are not taking them seriously today. The church must recognize this and know that the young people are looking for a cause that matters and a community that cares.

The historical research focused on overlooking the concerns of women of color within the women's movement. The indifference to the issues of the women of color throughout the movement is a prime example of what can happen when one excludes certain voices within his or her population. The invisibility of the women of color's presence, participation, and contributions was overlooked and not valued by white feminists. The results of the invisibility led to division, alienation, and lack of support from the women of color to the overall objective of the movement. The church can suffer the same fate if we continue to overlook our young people because of their limited capabilities, intelligence, and leadership. We must remember that everyone has a vital role to play in the success of any organization or community. Being overlooked can have a lasting impact and have profound consequences. This generations have a growing need to be included and socially accepted by their peers and leaders. Any organization involving this generation must find a way to be inclusive in their planning and leadership. We must establish a feeling of belonging by creating a path for leadership so that their voices are heard, and their opinion matters. When allowed to play an essential role in the

community, it encourages self-confidence and self-awareness, which promotes acceptance and can help them grow into young leaders of tomorrow.

In addition, we must not ignore this generation in leadership because it may cause them to question their purpose and need in the church community. We must give them a sense of ownership by providing adequate training, and support helping them in carrying out their purpose as part of the larger fellowship within the church. As a result, they can gain the participation of their youth counterparts in the congregation and the local community. Once they are trained in leadership, they can be prepared for service within the congregation and remove the consequences that lead to division, alienation, and lack of support in the women's movement.

Next, the theological foundation for this project examined the practical workings of liberation theology. This was done through the exploration of the writings, research, and perspectives of various theologians, all correlating with the project's focus. Liberation theology concludes that God speaks particularly through the poor and that the Bible can be understood only when seen from the perspective of the poor.

For this project, liberation theology highlights the theological viewpoints on how Jesus elevated people throughout scripture because they were powerless, marginalized, and at risk. The Bible is filled with numerous examples of how Jesus liberated, transformed, and freed individuals from what prevents them from becoming all that God has intended them to be. Jesus proclaims in Luke 4:18 that "the Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free."

When Jesus elevated the powerless in biblical times, he was lifting those who were considered the least of these. All the thoughts and ideas of these liberation theologians provide insight and optimism for oppression individuals who are excluded from society. Liberation theology plays a part in breaking silences and making new stories. A free person tells his or her own story. A valued person lives in a society in which his story has a place. To reiterate James Cone, liberation theology is a language about freedom, and that freedom is derived from one's participation in the struggle of those who are oppressed. If one's language about freedom is derived from one's involvement in an oppressed people's struggle for freedom, then it is a Christian language. Applying this Christian language makes us accountable to God encountered in the oppressed community.[152]

Liberation theology is key to deriving answers and solutions to address the overlooking of youth in leadership. The young people, in my context, have not been able to exercise their freedom to lead. They are disenfranchised and underrepresented in leadership. This disenfranchisement and underrepresentation have denied and silenced their voices. They have not been able to give voice to their thoughts, concerns, convictions, or beliefs responding to their status. Having a voice is crucial. Sometimes just being able to speak, to be heard, to be believed, are crucial parts of membership in a family, a community, and a society. By redefining, whose voice is valued, we redefine our society and its values. If our young people are to perceive the church as "the place to be," we must acknowledge their struggles and assist them in becoming an intricate part of the community.

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[152] James Cone, *Speaking the Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 11.

Finally, for the interdisciplinary foundation, Social Psychology was researched because it covers the theme of exclusion. Social psychologist knows that exclusion and rejection are such powerful fears that people will do all sorts of things to avoid. Understanding how people relate to each other, why they choose to exclude and ignore others, and what determines their response to rejection and exclusion has never been of greater importance than today. Despite the far-reaching implications of social exclusion on both social outcasts and society as a whole, it was only in the last decade that social psychology began to regard social exclusion as an area worthy of investigation rather than merely and outcome to be avoided.

Arguably, human beings are among the most socially dependent creatures. Our success owes much to our ability to cooperate and collaborate. It seems reasonable to argue that the need to interact with others and the ability to form and maintain complex and rewarding social relationships are among the most fundamental human needs. Throughout most of our history, we lived, loved, and labored within the confines of small, intimate groups where we knew, and were known by, each member. Within these groups, we were sheltered from the elements, protected from predators, and ultimately allowed to propagate and prosper. To be rejected and excluded from the group, and the benefits of membership would be likened to a death sentence.

I examined the Need-Threat Model to understand how being excluded from desired social relationships is harmful to the individual's self-esteem, meaningful existence, belongingness, and control. Behavioral reactions to the exclusion can cause antisocial, aggressive, or passive and self-defeating responses. Furthermore, when we

evaluate the actual experiences that people have when excluded, it opens up potential avenues for strategic intervention aimed at inclusion.

In conclusion, the foundational research for this project offered a different perspective and a better understanding of what it means to be overlooked. The project, "Generation Z: A Seat at the Table," seeks to address the need for youth leadership and to provide a voice to those who are excluded from desired relationships. My passion for pursuing this project originated in personal experiences in similar environments. The project seeks to work with teens to understand their role as Christians and as future leaders in the church.

Through this research, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of how critical youth leadership is to the health of the church. One of the ultimate goals, beyond this project's scope, is to allow the youth leaders to plan all youth events for the upcoming year. My current position as Director of Youth Ministry bears witness to the effectiveness of such a program.

## Methodology

*Project Overview*

This study used a qualitative research design to address the hypothesis. "Qualitative data tends to be open-ended without responses, while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses such as those found on questionnaires or psychological instruments."[153] Although the research design is qualitative, the ideas of quantitative data collection were included through surveys and assessments. This

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[153] John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 14.

qualitative study used multiple forms of data, such as group sessions, surveys, and questionnaires. Triangulating data sources is identified as "a means for seeking convergence across qualitative and quantitative methods."[154] Due to the use of qualitative and quantitative data, the research design for this study could be identified as a convergent mixed method because of the converging or merging of quantitative and qualitative data. My role in the study is the primary distinction between the quantitative and qualitative methods of study. There are a few basic characteristics associated with the role of a qualitative method of study.

By conducting the study at First Baptist Church of South Richmond satisfied the characteristic of a natural setting because it is the context where participants experienced the issues associated with this project. Also, this characteristic includes gathering information "by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context."[155] An essential component of this study was the face-to-face interactions with me serving as a key to the instrument of the study. This study thoroughly conformed to this characteristic since I gathered all the information and interpretation of data in concert with professional and context associates.

A third basic characteristic of qualitative research is the use of multiple sources of data. This project used video for remembrance and observations and provided the participants with an opportunity to express themselves without restrictions on their ideas and involvement. The multiple sources of data provided me with enough data to organize and cross-reference for a thorough analysis of the project. Another basic characteristic of qualitative research is that it assisted in establishing an all-inclusive set supposition is

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[154] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design,* 14.

[155] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 181.

inductive and deductive data analysis. "The inductive process illustrates working back and forth between themes and the database, while deductively, the researchers look back at their data from the themes to determine if more evidence can support each theme or whether they need to gather additional information."[156]

Participants' meanings are another basic characteristic of qualitative research. Creswell explains, "The researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research."[157] In the Emergent design, the researcher learns about the problem or issue from the participants and uses their initial information to conduct the research to address the problem. Reflexivity is a core characteristic of qualitative research, because in conducting the research, "inquirers reflect about how their role in the study and their background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to data."[158] Therefore, I had to be intentional not to shape the participant's interpretation of the problem. Instead, my role was not to promote personal biases and standards in the study but to let the participants shape the direction of the study toward their real-life experiences, situations or practices that distinguish this generation from past generations.

Lastly, as a qualitative researcher, there existed a need to establish a complex view of the problem being researched. This project used a multitude of perspectives to identify the factors involved in the study and to get a much broader view of the problem. According to Creswell, "this larger picture is not necessarily a linear model of cause and

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[156] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 181.

[157] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 182.

[158] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 182.

effect but rather a model of multiple factors interacting in different ways."[159] In further discussion of the typical characteristics of qualitative research, Creswell identifies more specific approaches such as strategies of inquiry, designs, or procedures for conducting the research. Creswell recommends that "qualitative researchers choose from among the possibilities, such as narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory."[160]

Within the social sciences and health sciences, these approaches are the most popular. This project is based on the phenomenological inquiry. In Creswell's discussion of phenomenological research, Creswell says it "is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants."[161] Creswell's description allows for several individuals, who have experienced the same phenomenon, to be included in the study with their differing perspectives. A key element of this study is the overlooking of youth in leadership. Since this is not an element that can be quantified, it appears that a phenomenological inquiry was best suited for this project. This type of inquiry heavily depends on the participants' opinions and is subjective to their attitudes about the community of faith, their backgrounds, and feelings toward the issues. Creswell suggests that through observation of participants and soliciting their direct responses, it may support the idea of establishing a collaborative ministry as a model to involve youth in leadership. The use of a phenomenological design of inquiry allows me to get a sense

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[159] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 182.

[160] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 183.

[161] Creswell and Creswell, Research Design, 13.

of how the participants may feel about the community of faith by designing a survey and questionnaires that help gauge their way of thinking.

*Author's Role and Attributes*

The qualitative design of inquiry includes a different role for the researcher. The researcher comments on the design that is used, the overall data collection, and their role in the study. Creswell offers several general characteristics of the role of the researcher. Several of them, as stated earlier, applied to this project. In his discussion, Creswell says that "qualitative research is interpretative research, the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants. This introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the qualitative research process."[162] With that in mind, it means that I can have nuances that apply to their particular context and themselves. This project was conducted at First Baptist Church of South Richmond, where I am the Youth Minister. Being the Youth Minister allows for a sustainable long-term relationship with the youth and their families. As the Youth Minister, it is also inherent to be aware of the connections between the participants in the study and me. This is necessary because the relationship to the context could unduly influence the findings and explanations. Studying one's context can lead to compromises in my ability to unveil evidence. It can also raise concerns over any disproportion of influence that may exist between the inquirer and the participants. However, in this study, the participants might be at ease over any issues related to the roles of the researcher and participants.

A Human Research Subject Consent Form was used to define the expectations of the participants and solicited their voluntary consent to participate in the study. The form

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[162] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 14.

explained the project and explained how the information would be used. The Human Research Subject Consent Form also clarified the risks and benefits of the study. Participants volunteered without coercion and were told the information would not be used to place the participants at risk and that complete anonymity would be maintained for any feedback, quotes, or any other personal contributions. Serving as the Youth Minister offered a significant level of credibility to the project. Even though this could be viewed as a negative influence on the results, it can also be viewed as a positive influence because of the way this project has demonstrated my concerns for the exclusion of youth in leadership. My position as Youth Minister, in the context, will allow the participants to take on leadership roles, which in turn can give them a voice in the decision-making process within the church.

## Implementation

The methodology of this project used a qualitative research design to address the hypothesis. In considering this problem as a catalyst for a youth leadership model, the project design required a study of ten to fifteen youth to be educated in leadership over six weeks, with training modules, surveys, questionnaires, and group forums aim to provide adequate data to support the success of this project. Through the sessions and activities, a desired outcome of the project is to develop and establish a youth leadership model for which the youth will be placed in leadership positions where they will be mentored and trained to become effective leaders. Prayerfully, this will give them a sense of belonging and eliminate the feelings of exclusion from church leadership.

The field testing for this training model was conducted in the Fall of the year 2019 at First Baptist Church of South Richmond. The sessions were conducted during the 9:15 am Sunday service with participants ranging from ages thirteen to eighteen. I offered applications for young people interested in church leadership, and thirteen participants were selected from the applications submitted. During the six weeks, the participants completed a questionnaire at the beginning of week one and the end of week six. This questionnaire offered a baseline of their knowledge of leadership, the ability to lead, and awareness of where they envisioned themselves in the leadership at the church. After six weeks, one of the objectives was to provide enough insight and knowledge about leadership that they can design a leadership model in which they take ownership.

I believe that when this generation takes ownership and understand what is required to lead, they will be more willing to measure up to those requirements. Once the model is designed, the participants will be given a spiritual assessment that will provide insight into their area of giftedness and be mentored accordingly. A final assessment was taken to test their knowledge and ability to lead. In addition, the participants who complete the training selected officers and attended the church-wide leadership conference. The officers will help plan the youth events for the upcoming year. The desired outcome of this project is that the participants will become more active in leadership within the church and be given a seat at the table when it comes to the decision-making process. Another expressed desire of this project is that the training and development will help to impart Christian leadership qualities in our youth that will lead to continuity of leadership within the church.

The overall project outcome was to address the lack of youth leadership within the church. For each training session, it is important to discuss the issues that arise. Creswell suggests that "data collection steps include setting boundaries for the study through sampling and recruitment, collecting information and recruitment, collecting information through unstructured and semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials, as well as establishing the protocol for recording information."[163] For this project, the context was within First Baptist Church of South Richmond, and the recruitment has already been addressed. Data was collected through structured surveys, questionnaires, training sessions, and assessments. The sessions were video recorded for observations and remembrance.

The pre-project work for this study was an email invitation sent to all parents of pre-selected youth to invite them to participate and answer the survey questions so that I could explore the thoughts of the participants on youth leadership. An example of the survey is provided in Appendix A. Upon receipt of an affirmative reply to participate in the leadership training, and official Human Research Subjects Consent Form was provided and needed to be completed before the first session.

The survey determined the participant's demographics. A key element of focus for the research to develop an accurate profile for the project was the age of each participant because the project design was for youth between the ages of thirteen to eighteen. The other elements of their profile were gender, grade level, race, and whether they came from a single-parent household or two-parent household. The demographics allowed me to have some initial insights into factors that might affect their thoughts on leadership. Some additional questions on the survey are: Do you believe that leaders should lead

[163] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 185.

from the front or the back? Do you think that respect should be given or earned? I believe words can impact the way people interact within my church, school, and community? I believe that the actions of a leader are more powerful than the words they say? The participant's profile is noted in Table 1.

| Participate | Age | Gender | Grade Level | Household | Context Member |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 15 | F | 10th | Single Parent | Yes |
| 2 | 14 | F | 9th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 3 | 14 | F | 9th | Single Parent | Yes |
| 4 | 12 | F | 7th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 5 | 13 | M | 8th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 6 | 17 | F | 12th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 7 | 11 | F | 6th | Single Parent | Yes |
| 8 | 16 | F | 11th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 9 | 15 | M | 10th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 10 | 16 | M | 11th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 11 | 16 | F | 11th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 12 | 14 | M | 9th | Single Parent | Yes |
| 13 | 14 | F | 9th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 14 | 13 | F | 8th | Two Parent | Yes |
| 15 | 15 | F | 10th | Two Parent | Yes |

Table 1. Participant profile

The participant's profile identified that the average age was fifteen years old. Participants under the age of thirteen are not considered in the statistics. Seventy percent of the participants were female, and thirty percent were male. Seventy-five percent of participants were from a two-family household, and twenty-five percent were from a single-family household. All participants were members of the church.

Session One was the project's orientation. In this session, the participants were oriented about the project and its purpose. As part of the orientation, an Ice Breaker using a questionnaire was used to allow participants time for personal interaction and discussion (Appendix B). This questionnaire was used as a means of gathering

information and data collection. The creation of the questionnaire was to gain the participant's thoughts on leadership. Following the Ice Breaker, a definition of youth leadership was provided to explain why youth leadership is important. Additional discussion about how self-leadership encompasses the development of self, identity, and community.

During this session, a PowerPoint presentation from Arthur David Canales, "Models of Christian Leadership in Youth Ministry," was introduced. [164] This presentation included four types of leadership models: servant leadership, moral leadership, spiritual leadership, and transformational leadership for discussion. Each leadership module served as the education portion of the project throughout the six-week sessions.

Session Two was the introduction to servant leadership. The purpose of this session was for the participants to understand what servant leadership is and why it is important to serve within their community. Jesus was used as an example of a servant leader. The session began with the scripture from Matthew 20:25-28. This scripture was used to clarify the words of Jesus to his disciples about servant leadership. For this focus session, eight characteristics of a servant leader discussed: listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and building community. Each component was discussed at length and was followed up by activity.

Session Three was a presentation on moral leadership. The purpose of this session was to discuss morals and values. For this session, the discussion on moral leadership included integrity, honesty, humility, trustworthiness, and prudence (cautiousness).

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[164] Arthur David Canales, "Models of Christian Leadership in Youth Ministry," *Journal of Religious Education Association* 109, no. 1 (2014): 24-44.

During this session, the participants discuss their thoughts on morals and values when dealing with what is right and what is wrong. In addition, a discussion on how the choice of friends can have a lasting effect. Throughout this discussion, the participants described several scenarios in which they found themselves in and explained the challenges that derive from certain friendships.

Session Four was on spiritual leadership. This session began with educating the participants on how the life of Jesus is filled with spirituality and leadership. Jesus is the spiritual master and leader for all to emulate. This session highlighted some of Jesus' characteristics such as his moral and ethical behavior, his preferential treatment for the poor, how he treated the marginalized in our society with respect and dignity, and how he advocated non-violence and peace. This session highlighted important spiritual attributes to include prayer, meditation, and contemplation. Six characteristics of spiritual leadership were discussed. They are as follows: they lead others into their own encounter with God, they lead others to discover their own purpose, they lead others into transformation—not production, they impact the atmosphere, they help people see old things new, and they gain a following because of who they are—not because of a position they hold.

Session Five was on transformational leadership. This session began with a discussion on how they are change-makers and how the generations before them are looking forward to seeing the changes they are going to make. They were told that it is time for them to have a seat at the table and transform the church of tomorrow. At the beginning of the session, the scripture Romans 12:2 was read, followed by a discussion on how Jesus was a transformative leader. This session focused on three "F's": feed your

mind with the truth, free your mind from destructive thoughts, focus your mind on the right things. A brief discussion of the differences between an unmanaged mind and a managed mind. An unmanaged mind leads to confusion, pressure, stress, chaos, and conflict. A managed mind leads to peace, confidence, strength, security, and serenity. After the discussion, each participant received an assessment of transformational leadership, followed by a brief discussion (Appendix C).

Session Six was the final session, where the participants designed their leadership model. Before designing the model, we reviewed all previous leadership models, and the participants were asked the list attributes of a good leader. The participants utilized all the information and designed their model (Appendix D). I hope that by creating the model themselves, they will take ownership and put it into practice. Following the design, the participants selected officers for the upcoming year. The session was concluded with a spiritual gifts assessment to identify their area of giftedness for mentoring.

## Analysis

The analyses were conducted within the emergent design framework to explore the thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs of the youth. This design maximizes subjectivity by understanding the world through the personal experiences of the participant versus a spectator. In other words, this approach encourages my involvement in ways that mimic that of participants rather than simply observing participants. We deemed this framework appropriate because it allowed the participants to be placed at the center of the research, offering this sometimes marginalized group an opportunity to describe, in their words, their opinions based on their experiences. Data analyses were based on data gathered

mainly from surveys, questionnaires, and sessions. Data were utilized from numerous sessions. After reviewing the data, I identified patterns from common responses and determined whether the information supported the hypothesis.

In the orientation, the participants were asked to introduce themselves by stating their name, grade level, and the school they attend. Following the introductions, a questionnaire was handed out for the participants to complete. The questionnaire was used to allow participants time for personal interaction and discussion as well as a means to gather information for data collection (Appendix B). There were ten questions in all, and each question provided information into the mindsets of the teens involving leadership. Several key points were noted in observing what they shared. The first notable observation was the responses to Question one, "Define leadership? This question was asked because it allowed me to see if they would use keywords in defining leadership, such as honesty, courage, and vision. Almost all of the participants said that a leader was someone who takes charge and can lead a group. Question two, "What are some attributes of a good leader?" For this question, I wanted to see what the participants considered to be good leadership traits. It gives me an idea of how they would lead if put in charge. Most of the participants used adjectives such as, encourages, self-aware, confident, and kind." Question three, "Some people believe that certain people are born to be leaders, others believe that people become leaders, and still others believe that it can be both. What do you believe? And Why? Most participants thought that both are true. However, a few thought that as one gets older, they can develop into a leader because of experience and knowledge. Question four, "Do you think teens can lead?" All participants said yes, with the majority stating they are smart, capable and they have

influence. Question five, "Do you think teens are capable of leading in church? School? Community? All participant's responses were yes, but for different reasons. Most stated that they are capable because they are the next generation with good ideas and confidence to speak their minds. Question six, "Should the youth be included in the decision-making process within the church? School? Community? If so, Why or why not? Most responses were that they were the future, and others stated that they have good ideas, opinions, and lots of influence, which can contribute to the church. Question seven, "What would motivate you to take a leadership role?" There were quite a few varying answers, but two participants stated that seeing change and changing people's perceptions of them would motivate them to take on a leadership role. Question eight, "What tools do you need to equip you to take on a leadership role?" The answer varied with some participants answering, confidence, listening skills, empathy, focus, and finally, a change in mindset. Question nine, "Do you think teens can communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively?" All participants replied yes. Question ten, "Do you think teens can collaborate effectively with adults?" Most replied yes; however, a few stated that there needs to be a level of respect given on both parties. The positive feedback from the questionnaire provided support for my hypothesis that when youth are allowed to be trained and mentored in leadership, they become empowered, affirmed, and motivated.

The second session provided a presentation on servant leadership, and the participants were asked to list ten jobs they do regularly. After recording the job, put the name of one person for whom you would be willing to do that job if needed, or you want to help out. Most participants put their parent's names beside the tasks. A question was raised if they would do these tasks for anyone else? Most said maybe a friend only if they

needed their help. The question was raised who would do these jobs for money? All participants were motivated by the thought of being paid. Their response is in line with this generation's entrepreneurial spirit and the fears that this generation has with being in debt. It also allowed for a discussion about servanthood and how serving does not involve getting paid or rewarded for what we do. Serving others sometimes means doing things we do not enjoy, or things that may be hard for us. Unselfish devotion and a spirit of sacrifice have always been and always will be the first requisite of acceptable service. The session concluded with an understanding that we serve others because we love them, and because we love Jesus. After the discussion, a consensus was formed by the participants that they have no problem with serving their church community in whatever capacity required. This session supports the hypothesis that when trained and mentored, the youth would be motivated to move beyond themselves and act justly and objectively with kindness.

The third session was on moral leadership. This session, as noted earlier, was a discussion on morals, values, and standards. As part of this discussion, the question was raised about the choice of friends. One participant stated that just because a person does bad things, they can still be a good friend. This prompted the question, "Who do you allow in your circle?" The thought of being guilty by association developed. One participant said he has two sets of friends, school friends, and church friends, and the morality between the two is sometimes complicated. Participants agreed that no friendship should change moral standards. Family, church, and mentors set morals and values. A song by Donald Lawrence, "Your Righteous Mind," was played, and each participant was to identify the morality in the song such as, "Watch what you say and

what you do" and "Guard your heart and your mind." Following the song, each participant was given a piece of paper with a moral dilemma written on it. The participants were asked what they would do if they found themselves in that situation. This exercise was for me to observe the reactions and responses of the participants.

The examples of the moral dilemmas are as follows: a friend has access to a porn site, and he or she wants to give out access, what will you do? You are at a friend's party and offer you some drugs or a drink, what would you do? How will you react to a coach or teacher angrily coming toward you? What would you do, or how would you defuse the situation? If the majority of the people decide to go in the wrong direction, would you go with them? Is there a moral obligation to help the less fortunate? A discussion about President Trumps' immigration laws was brought up, and most disagree with what the president is doing by stating that it is morally wrong to separate children from their families. This open forum allowed for some interesting dialogue, and it was revealed that the participants were all at an age where they know the difference between right and wrong. This session concluded with reminding them to be morally conscious and filled with respect, honesty, and independence in knowing they are doing the right thing. Set standards in which to live, and when difficult situations arise, ask this question, "What would Jesus do?" This exercise supports my hypothesis that when given a chance to lead, they would choose what is morally right most of the time.

The fourth session was on spiritual leadership. This session was about educating the participants on how the life of Jesus was filled with spirituality and leadership. Jesus is the spiritual master and leader for all to emulate. The session begins by highlighting some of Jesus' characteristics, Characteristics such as, how Jesus lived morally and

ethically, how Jesus demonstrated preferential treatment for the poor, how Jesus treated the marginalized or society with respect and dignity, how he advocated non-violence and peace and most importantly how he was a person of prayer, meditation, and contemplation. The participants were asked to identify spiritual people in their lives, and what characteristics did they display to identify them as spiritual? Most participants agreed that the person shows a deep abiding faith in God by praying and reading the Bible.

One participant raised this question, "Can you have a spiritual leader outside of the church?" One participant stated we cannot always go to church; therefore, it is great to have someone who is spiritually grounded to give spiritual advice. Most participants agreed that spiritual leaders should have a healthy prayer life even though most of them do not pray every day. The topic of prayer prompted a discussion on prayer in school. Most said that they pray silent prayers because it is not allowed in school. Most participants said that they were confident enough to pray silent prayers and that they were aware that others are watching. When asked whether they would be willing to pray in front of their peers, most said they would be willing but not all the time.

Following the discussions on prayer, a question was raised by a participant about forgiveness. Most stated that forgiveness was hard sometimes even though they know they have to forgive others eventually. What was most profound during this teaching forum was the discussion on teen suicide. One participant told a story of how he talked about a fellow student out of committing suicide. On the other hand, one participant felt that it was difficult to know if a fellow student was serious about committing suicide because she believes it's a cry for attention. This discussion allowed me to express my

concerns about how social media exacerbates the feelings of anxiety and depression. Most agreed that it is difficult not to be connected at all times, but their mental health is more important.

From this dialogue, participants were informed that having compassion is a spiritual virtue and how spiritual leaders impact the atmosphere by being kind and compassionate towards one another. This session concluded with the thought that to lead people to God's way, they must know God for themselves by reading and studying the Bible. This session ended with a song, and everyone reciting the Lord's Prayer. This session supported my hypothesis by allowing me to know that the participants are willing to grow spiritually and treat others with kindness, dignity, and respect.

The fifth session was on transformational leadership. The purpose of this session was for the participants to understand how they can be transformational leaders by feeding their minds with the truth, freeing their minds from destructive thoughts, focusing their minds on the right things. A conversation developed about the difference between an unmanaged mind and a managed mind. The participants were asked about the difference between the two. After the discussion, the participants were asked to take a transformational leadership assessment to give me an indication of where they were in regards to leading and to identify areas in which they need to focus (Appendix 3). Results of the Assessment are in Figures one, two, three, four, and five.

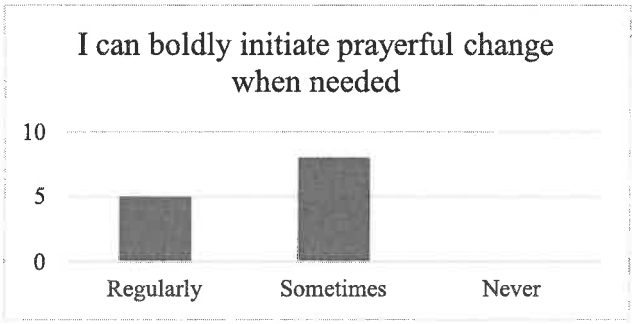



Figure 1. Assessment results for initiating a prayerful change

Figure 1 This data shows that a majority (60%) of participants can sometimes make a case for change or recognized the need for change, while 40 % can initiate effective change regularly. This data is not surprising because understanding and mastering a change process takes some skills and abilities that overtime will be enhanced.

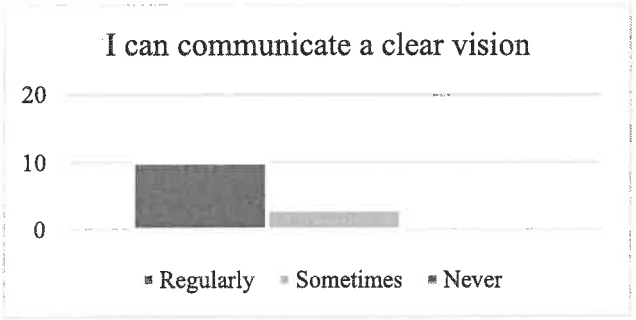



Figure 2. Assessment results for communicating a clear vision

Figure 2. Successful leadership begins with a clear vision, which reflects a shared purpose. The ability to move people forward is a strong attribute of leadership. Seventy-five percent of participants believe that they could communicate a clear vision regularly, and 25% sometimes.

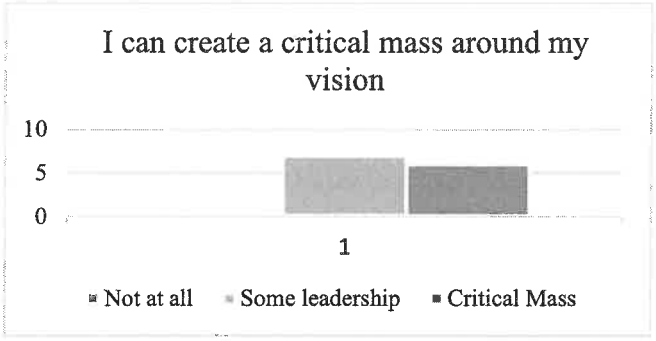



Figure 3. Assessment results for creating a critical mass around my vision

Figure 3. This data shows that 55% of participants believe that they can influence some leaders to support their vision. In comparison, 45% think that they have the confidence to influence a significant amount of leaders to support their view.

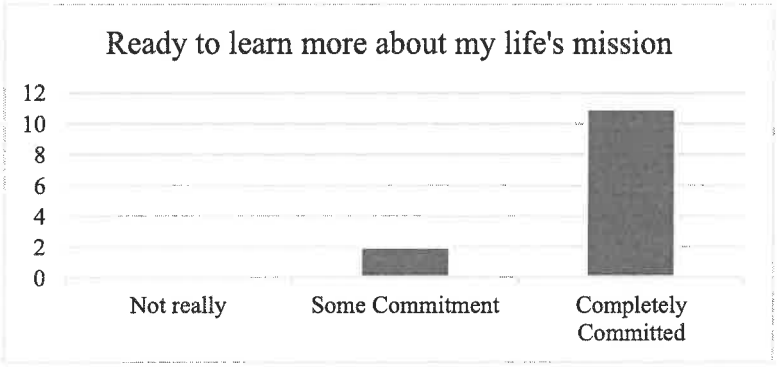



Figure 4. Assessment results for learning more about my life's mission

Figure 4. This data reveals that 85% of the participants say that they are wholly committed to learning about God's plan for their lives, while 15% say that they will invest some time in learning more about their life's mission.

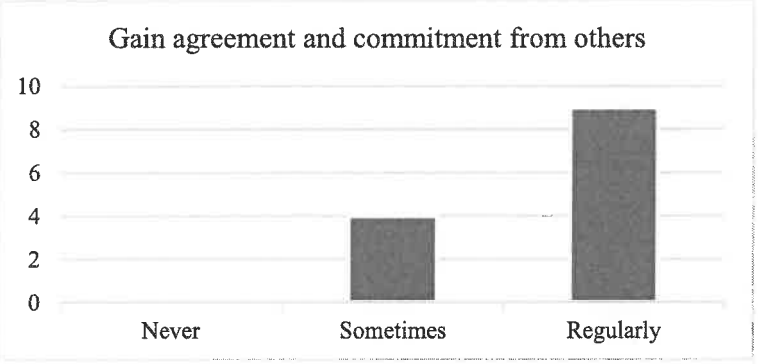



Figure 5. Assessment results for gaining agreement and commitment for others

Figure 5. This data shows that 70% of participants that are highly effective at achieving the cooperation and commitment from others to accomplish their goals. In comparison, 30% revealed that they could gain involvement sometimes all depending on what the goals are.

This session ended by discussing the assessment. The results of the evaluation help to support my hypothesis that when allowed to lead, this generation can become the change-makers that church needs to move forward in the future.

The data below are the results of the pre-project. Figures six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve reveals the thoughts of participants regarding leadership. The participant's answers show that they have a good understanding of the requirements of a leader.

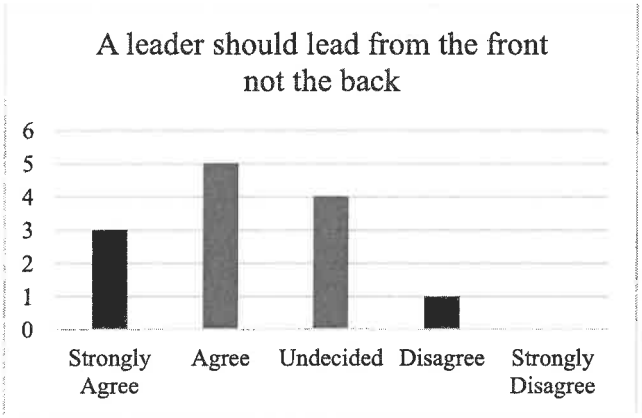



Figure 6. Assessment results for how a leader should lead

The analysis of questions seven allows me to know that there is collective agreement from the majority of the youth that prefers a leader who can take charge of a task and can lead others toward the vision with 23% strongly agree, 38% agree, 31% undecided, followed by 1% disagreeing.

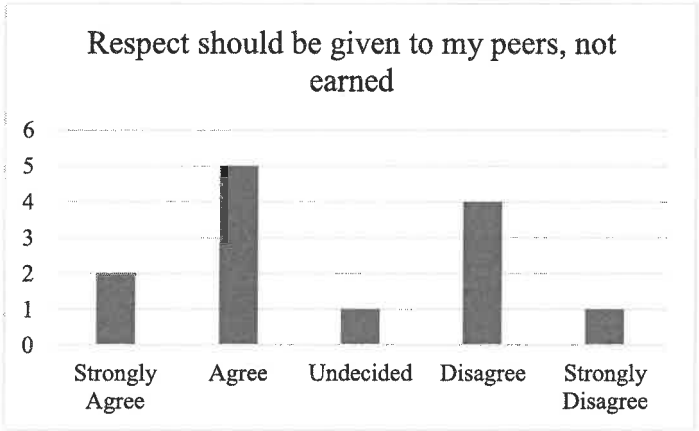



Figure 7. Assessment results for whether respect should be given rather than earned

The graph displayed mixed reactions in regards to whether their peers should be given respect without earning it. Even though the graph indicates that most agree that respect should be automatically given. Statistically, with 15% strongly agree, 38% agree, 1% undecided, 31% disagree, concluding with 1 % strongly disagreeing.

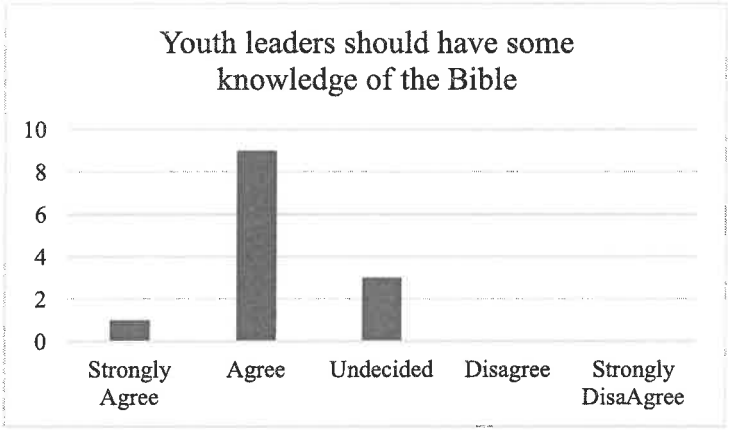



Figure 8. Assessment results for Bible knowledge of youth leaders

The majority of the participants agreed that the youth leaders should have some understanding of the Bible and should attend the Youth Bible Study to learn more about God. Statistically, 1% strongly agree, 70% agree, and 23% undecided.

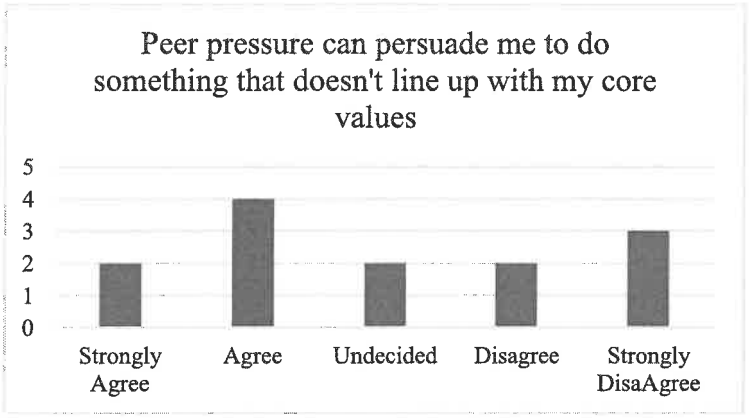



Figure 9. Assessment results for the impact of peer pressure

The majority of the participants agreed that they could be persuaded to do things that do not line up with their core values. This statistic is not surprising considering the peer pressure place on our teens to conform and fit in. Fifteen percent strongly agree, 31% agree, 15% undecided, 15% disagree, and 23% strongly disagree.

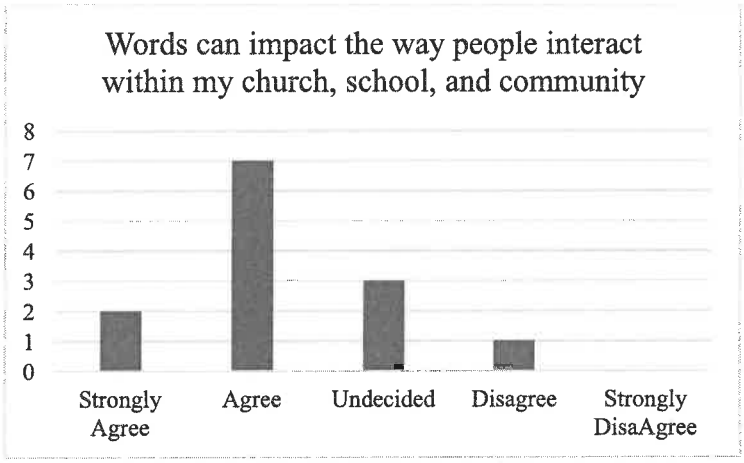



Figure 10. Assessment results for the impact of words

The majority of the participants agreed that words can have a profound effect and can impact a person's interaction within their church, school, and community. This graph shows how words can significantly influence perception and carry enormous weight. Statistically, 15% strongly agree, 54% agree, 23% undecided, and 1% disagree.

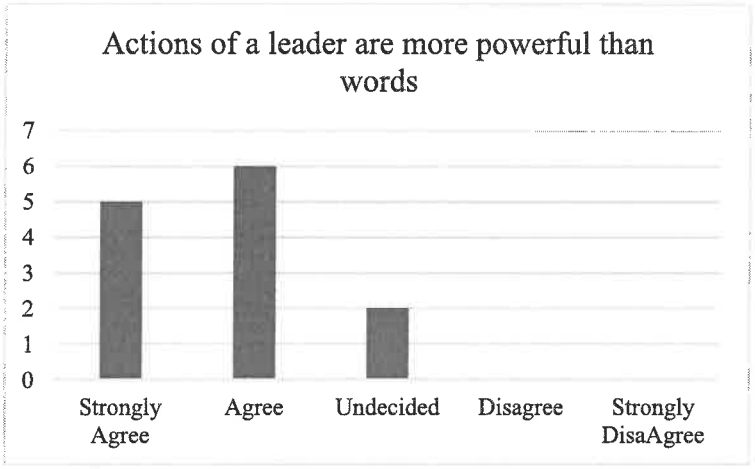



Figure 11. Assessment results for the comparison between a leader's actions and words

Most participants say church leaders make a lot of promises but do not follow through on those promises. This data shows that participants are more interested in the actions of a leader than rhetoric. Statistically, 38% strongly agree, 46% agree, and 15% undecided.

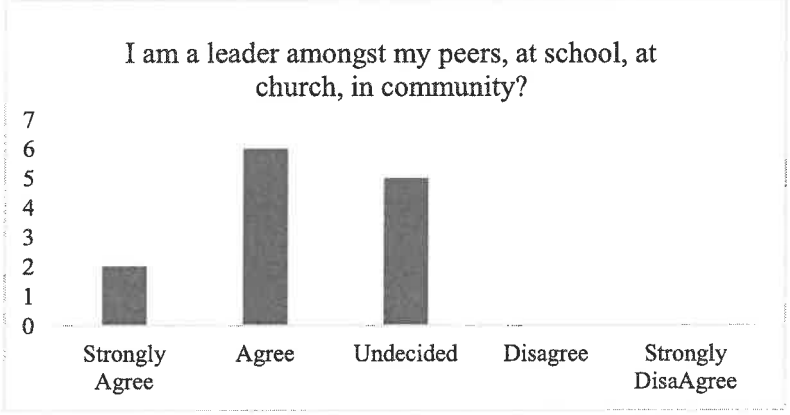



Figure 12. Assessment results for participant leadership status

Most participants agreed that they are a leader amongst their peers in school, church, and community. This data displayed their confidence and leadership abilities. Statistically, 15% strongly agreed, 46% agree, and 38% undecided.

## Conclusion

This project began with the hypothesis that the absence of youth in leadership weakens the God-given gifts, talents, and diverse abilities that our youth possess. This research has substantiated the claim that when the youth are allowed to lead, they become empowered, inspired, and motivated to move beyond themselves and act justly, with fairness and objectivity. This claim was demonstrated by the data collected from the discussion forums, surveys, and assessments. The project met its goals by designing a youth leadership model and participating in leadership training. The participant demonstrated their knowledge of leadership by participating in the church-wide leadership conference. At this conference, the pastor reveals his vision for the upcoming year.

The pastor's 2020 vision was, "How to be an influencer? All leaders were asked to present a vision board of how they can become an influencer within their ministry. The youth participants presented their vision board to the church-wide leaders and described how they could become influencers through social media and other digital means. They were confident and motivated to help move their ministry forward. Their participation in the conference supports this project in two ways. One, when allowed to lead, they become empowered, inspired, and motivated to move beyond themselves to help support the church community. Two, when their voices are included in the decision-making process, they can be the change-makers needed to move the church toward the future. In addition, the Youth Leadership Model was implemented, and the Youth officers selected during the project were installed along with all ministry leaders for the 2020 season.

# APPENDIX A

# SURVEY

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
    - Male
    - Females
3. What grade are you in?
    - 6th
    - 7th
    - 8th
    - 9th
    - 10th
    - 11th
    - 12th
4. What is your race or ethnicity?
    - Black
    - White
    - Hispanic
    - Asian
    - Other
5. Who do you live with?
    - Just mother
    - Just father
    - Mother and Father
    - Grandparents
    - Others
6. I believe that most of the leaders of our generation are either athletes or entertainers?
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Undecided
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
7. I believe that a leader should lead from the front, not the back?
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Undecided
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
8. I believe respect should be given to my peers, not earned?
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Undecided
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
9. I believe that youth leaders should have some knowledge of the bible?
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree

- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. I believe that peer pressure can persuade me to do something that doesn't line up with my core values?
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Undecided
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
11. I believe WORDS can impact the way people interact within my church, school, and community?
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Undecided
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
12. I believe that the actions of a leader are more powerful than the words they say?
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Undecided
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
13. I believe I am a leader among my peers? At school? At church? In community?
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Undecided
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

# APPENDIX B

# QUESTIONNAIRE

Generation Z: A Seat at the Table

***Questionnaire***

1. Define leadership?

2. What are some attributes of a good leader?

3. Some people believe that certain people are born to be leaders (created by God to be a leader), others believe that people become leaders (they are developed as a result of special training or special situations), and still others believe that it can be both. What do you believe and why?

4. Do you think teens can lead?
   Why /Why not?

5. Do you think teens are capable of leading within the church? School? Community?
   If so, why/why not?

6. Should the youth leaders be included in the decision-making process within the church? School? Community?
   If so, why/why not?

7. What would motivate you to take a leadership role?

8. What tools do you need to equip you to take on a leadership role?

9. Do you think teens can communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively?

10. Do you think teens can collaborate effectively with adults?

# APPENDIX C

# SELF ASSESSMENT

**Self-Assessment - Seven Principles of Transformational Leadership**

1. Transformational leaders are able to articulate a clear, practical, and transformational vision.

***Do you clearly articulate a clear concise vision to others?***

NEVER——————SOMETIMES——————REGULARLY

2. Transformational leaders are highly effective at gaining the agreement and commitment of other people.

***Am I able to gain the agreement and commitment of others to my vision?***

NEVER——————SOMETIMES——————REGULARLY

3. The ability to effectively facilitate the learning of individuals, teams, and other reliable and reputable resources.

***Am I facilitating the learning's of others?***

NEVER——————SOMETIMES——————REGULARLY

4. The ability to boldly initiate prayerful change to fulfill the vision.

***Am I able to initiate prayerful change effectively?***

NEVER——————SOMETIMES——————REGULARLY

5. The ability to enlist, equip and empower others to fulfill the vision.

***Am I creating a critical mass of leadership around my vision?***

NOT AT ALL——————SOME LEADERSHIP ——————CRITICAL MASS

6. The ability to never stop learning about themselves with and without the help of others.

***Am I learning new skills and improving myself?***

NOT REALLY ——————REGULARLY——————DAILY

7. The ability to finish the race:

***Am I completely sold-out to my life mission?***

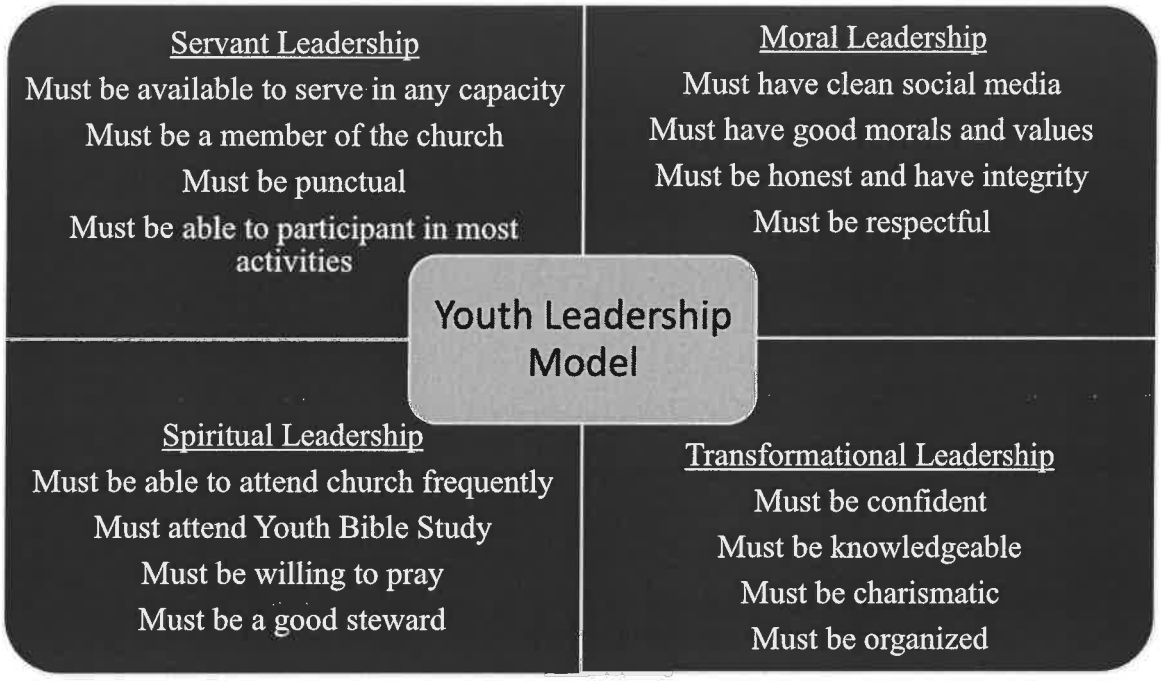
NOT REALLY ———SOME COMMITMENT ———COMPLETELY COMMITTED

Transformation leaders are awareness raisers who see the vision that align with their own spiritual life mission. As they make leadership commitments to the vision, they make commitments to their own emergence. As the leaders transform, the world is transformed.

*-Adapted from an article by Erik Rees, Minister of Life Mission at Saddleback Church*

# APPENDIX D

# YOUTH LEADERSHIP MODEL


Servant Leadership
Must be available to serve in any capacity
Must be a member of the church
Must be punctual
Must be able to participant in most activities
Moral Leadership
Must have clean social media
Must have good morals and values
Must be honest and have integrity
Must be respectful
Youth Leadership Model
Spiritual Leadership
Must be able to attend church frequently
Must attend Youth Bible Study
Must be willing to pray
Must be a good steward
Transformational Leadership
Must be confident
Must be knowledgeable
Must be charismatic
Must be organized

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